



**BLADE RUNNER 2: SEQUEL STAR SPEAKS OUT**

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How Child's Play  
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- ◆ CHUCK PALAHNIUK
- ◆ VENTURE BROS
- ◆ DARK MATTER
- ◆ ADVENTURE TIME
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**WHO YOU  
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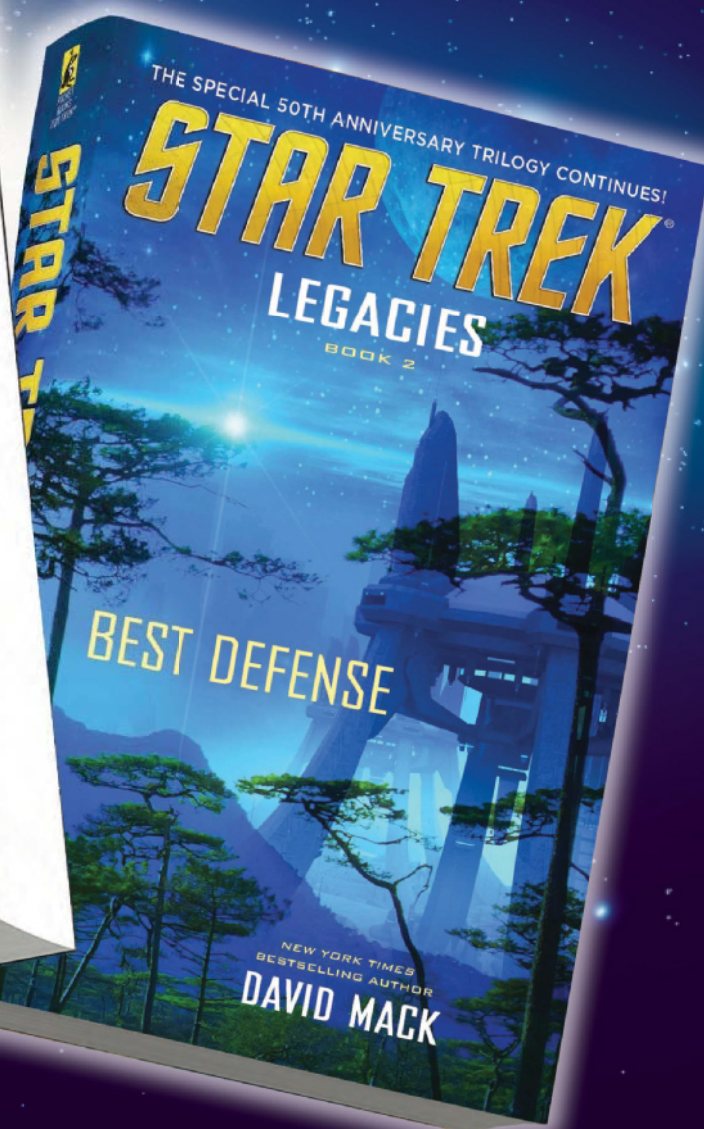
ISSUE 121



**SIMON & SCHUSTER IS PROUD TO PRESENT**

# **STAR TREK LEGACIES**

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Seemingly intent on giving real credence to the saying 'bad guys have all the fun', it's hard to remember a pre-production period during which a film's cast have had so much fun. Whether it's matching

Squad tattoos or the giving and receiving of some very questionable gifts, it's clear that the roster of *Suicide Squad* has had an absolute riot – which can only bode well for the film itself.

If you think about it, pretty much every decision made thus far has been spot on. From hiring an unconventional yet undisputedly excellent director in David Ayer and taking Jared Leto's Joker from what would otherwise be an introduction in a solo *Batman* movie (and away from all the Heath Ledger comparisons that would have ensued) to the casting of Will Smith – one of Hollywood's most guaranteed crowd-pleasers – Warner Bros has made many leftfield decisions, but unlike in *Batman V Superman*, these look like they just might pay off.

Speaking of the devil, the latter's less than favourable critical reception has only made *Suicide*

*Squad*'s success all the more crucial: someone has to stick it to Marvel. And right here in this magazine, we get the exclusive first word from the entire cast about why they are the people to do it.

Cinema's an exciting place at the moment, and you only have to keep turning these pages to discover why. With exclusive interviews on *Star Trek Beyond*, *Ghostbusters*, *Pete's Dragon* and more, there's so much going on that we couldn't be happier to bear witness to.

Also inside, make sure you check out our 20-page retro section, featuring a complete guide to the *Child's Play* series, a loving look back at *Space Jam*, and a complete filming location breakdown of the Forest of Dean.

Enjoy the issue, SciFiNow squaddies.

*Steve*

Steve Wright  
Editor

## GET EXCITED ABOUT SWISS ARMY MAN

You know when people say something along the lines of 'You've never seen a film like it', only for you to watch said movie and discover that you most definitely have? This won't happen with *Swiss Army Man*. I mean, how many other films do you recall that feature a suicidal castaway deciding to have a crack at survival with the help of a farting corpse, only to rediscover his zest for life along the way? The possessor of two endearing leads in Paul Dano and Daniel Radcliffe, and Sundance-acclaimed directing pair Dan Kwan and Daniel Scheinert, this doesn't have a release date yet, but we hold out hope. Come on UK distributors: pick it up.



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# 20 SUICIDE SQUAD

## JARED LETO'S GIFT CHOICES LAID BARE



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## MEET THE TEAM

**Q.** Which Suicide Squad solo movie do you most want to see?



**James Hoare**  
Editor in Chief

**A. Captain Boomerang**  
The boozy adventures of Barry McKenzie with superpowers.



**Steve Wright**  
Editor

**A. Killer Croc**  
What if Edward Scissorhands was unhinged?



**Jonathan Hatfull**  
Features Editor

**A. Harley Quinn**  
A team-up movie with Poison Ivy. They both deserve a good film.



**Poppy-Jay Palmer**  
Senior Staff Writer

**A. Katana**  
Her strong moral code and mad killing skills are an interesting mix.



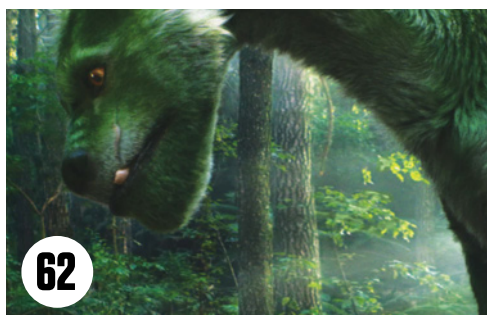
**Jon Wells**  
Art Editor

**A. El Diablo**  
Feature-length episode of Jeremy Kyle and the recovering pyromaniac.



**Jen Neal**  
Production Editor

**A. Deadshot**  
I just want to see Will Smith loving life and being ace for two hours.



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# Portal

Your essential, trustworthy and unrivalled guide to the latest genre happenings

## GRAND MOFF MENDELSON

We talk to Ben Mendelsohn about *Rogue One* secrets and Director Krennic...

WORDS ADAM TANSWELL

**A**s we're still six months ahead of the release of *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, everything is still being kept tightly under wraps.

In fact, with the reshoots it's currently undergoing, even what we do know could be thrown up in the air. But we still tried to trick actor Ben Mendelsohn, who is set to play the villainous Director Krennic, into spilling some secrets.

So what makes *Rogue One* so different from the rest of the *Star Wars* saga? "I can't tell you anything other than to say, of course, that it's very firmly in the canon of the entirety of the *Star Wars* films and that it will make great sense to anyone that has experienced it," says Mendelsohn, very carefully. "And it's a great story. It is a great *Star Wars* story. It is a truly great *Star Wars* story."

For Mendelsohn, being in this universe was a dream come true. "In 1977 I was there at the cinema," he says. "I was there with bells on! Do you remember the bubblegum cards? I had all the *Star Wars* bubblegum cards. I was a deep *Star Wars* tragic. I just absolutely adored it. And I still absolutely adore it. It's pretty awesome to be part of this. It was very unexpected and it was a great honour. And I hope we deliver in full.

"[I always wanted to be] Luke Skywalker. Or Han Solo. If you could have melded Han Solo, Luke Skywalker and Chewbacca together, that would've been perfect. Come on, Chewbacca? Who wouldn't want to be Chewbacca? If you could have melded them together, I would have been happy."







We interrogate Ryan Gosling for gossip on Ridley Scott's return to Replicants



Jeremy Shada – aka Finn – talks to us about the future of TV's most loveable show



Creator Jackson Publick on the secrets of the show's success



The latest on the Stephen King film adaptation's journey to the big screen

Like all fans, Mendelsohn has built up his own special relationship with the franchise over the years. "I think that it is a very classical structure," he says. "I think it is essentially a rollicking buddy-movie adventure with a deep spiritual undertone about doing what's right. It's about a hero's journey; of fighting for the loss of family and some higher ideal. I mean, it's got a lot in there.

"And it's very transportive," he continues, "because it's not based in anywhere that you can touch upon. Given the time that it appeared, I think that there really wasn't a lot of that type of material going around; it was pretty much a bygone era type of approach to a movie, and it had a pretty big effect on me."

Costume and make-up is always a huge part of a *Star Wars* film: Darth Vader's helmet, Han Solo's waistcoat, even Poe Dameron's jacket, have all

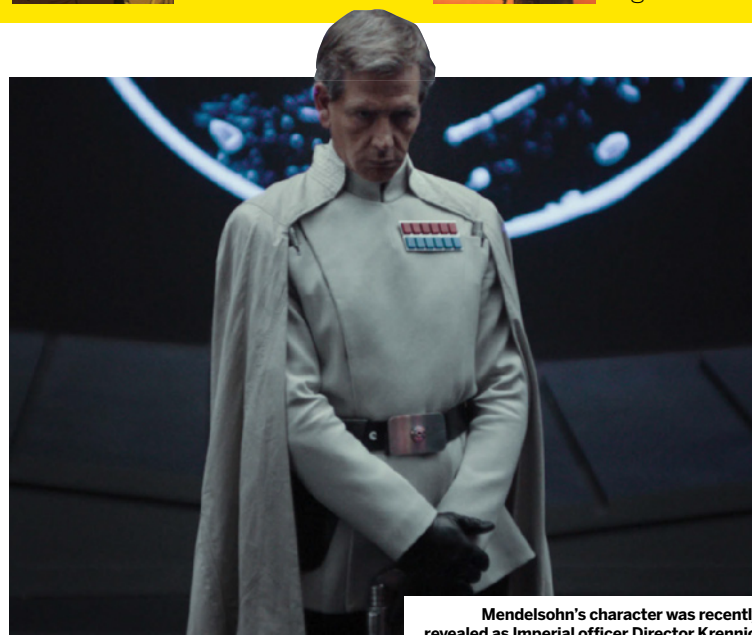
**PUTTING ON A COSTUME FOR THAT FILM, IT FELT VERY, VERY ROYAL. YOU KNOW?**  
BEN MENDELSON

become as iconic as the characters that wear them. So to don Krennic's Wulff Yularen-esque uniform was a great moment for Mendelsohn.

"I'm going to try and walk the correct line here. Putting on a costume for that film, it felt very, very royal, you know? It just felt like there was a moment of royalty. When you put it on for the first time and you're standing there, you go, 'Oh, it's pretty good. It's pretty good!'"

Mendelsohn ought to add some evil flair to the role; he's had a lot of practice playing dark, tortured characters like Pope in *Animal Kingdom* and Danny Rayburn from Netflix drama *Bloodline*. "I can always relate to anyone I am playing," he says. "I played Rupert Murdoch 15 years ago, and I like to think that I related it to my internal sense of what that was, too. But I always do. I think that modern screen acting is very much about bringing those two things together so that you can get a sense of immediacy going on.

"I think that one just tries to fulfil the bill as best you can, but after a while that stuff becomes a thing of association. People see a script and they go, 'Oh, I know who would be good to do this. You know... that guy.' That happens a bit, too." *Rogue One* director Gareth



Mendelsohn's character was recently revealed as Imperial officer Director Krennic.

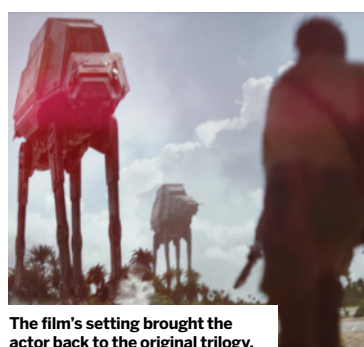
Edwards may be guilty of making that association too, but it seems to have worked out for the better.

"I'm a big fan of Gareth Edwards," Mendelsohn tells us. "I think *Monsters* is a beautiful film. I adored *Monsters*. It was made with my good friend Scoot McNairy and his lovely wife, Whitney. Gareth is an incredibly generous director. His technical knowledge is freakish. What he was able to do with the CGI world with *Monsters* with a very small budget was

absolutely remarkable, and I think that Gareth has a great desire to bring this large and complex world [of *Star Wars*] to the screen, so I was absolutely floored to be asked."

Finally, we ask Mendelsohn for a hint of what's to come in *Rogue One*. "Well, it starts with: A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away..."

*Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* will be released in cinemas on 16 December.



The film's setting brought the actor back to the original trilogy.



Mendelsohn describes his costume as "very royal".

## WHO'S WHO OF ROGUE ONE...

**JYN ERSO**  
(Felicity Jones)  
A HIGH SKILLED SOLDIER AND WARRIOR

**CAPTAIN CASSIAN ANDOR**  
(Diego Luna)  
A REBEL ALLIANCE OFFICER

**BAZE**  
(Jiang Wen)  
A FREELANCE ASSASSIN

**BODHI ROOK**  
(Riz Ahmed)  
A REBEL SOLDIER

**CHIRRUT**  
(Donnie Yen)  
A SPIRITUAL WARRIOR

**K-2SO**  
(Alan Tudyk)  
A REBEL-OWNED IMPERIAL ENFORCER DROID

**PAO**  
(Unknown)  
A FIERCE WARRIOR

**?**



# BLADE RUNNER 2 IS "NOT A REMAKE; IT'S A SEQUEL"

We speak exclusively to Ryan Gosling about Ridley Scott's sequel

WORDS ADAM TANSWELL



**"I've seen things you people wouldn't believe..."**

**How Ridley Scott's vision of the future defined modern sci-fi**

Some films are so powerful that they prove impossible to move past. For a generation of filmmakers, Ridley Scott's future is the definitive version. It was the template for urban sci-fi, for future noir – for anything that required a bit of grit. Here are the key *Blade Runner* ingredients:

**RAIN** Yes indeed, the omnipresent *Blade Runner* rain. It may have made the crew miserable, but it's all part of the future LA atmosphere. This horizon isn't bright; it's grim as hell. (See: *Strange Days*)

**BILLBOARDS** Leaving aside the curse of *Blade Runner* (most companies featured in it went out of business), these looming ads were a prescient piece of art direction that still look current today. (See: *Futuraama*)

**PERMANENT NIGHT** There's not a lot of daylight in *Blade Runner*. In fact, the sunrise at the end of the film is about as sunny as it gets. The rest of the movie is bathed in the neon lights of the city. (See: *Dark City*)

**HARD-BOILED HERO** It wasn't the first sci-fi to feature a noir hero, but it did offer the definitive one. Deckard is reluctant, boozy, rude and often ineffectual, and he gets beaten up a lot. (See: *Children Of Men*)

**MULTICULTURAL** The LA of *Blade Runner* reflects the diverse population. Different languages, different lifestyles – it's a city of the future. (See: *Serenity*)

**MORE HUMAN THAN HUMAN** Scott delivered androids in *Alien*, but the replicants in *Blade Runner* are more compelling, driven by human desires for life. (See: *Ex Machina*)

**R**yan Gosling is no stranger to science fiction. Despite high-profile roles in mainstream movies such as *The Notebook*, *Drive* and Shane Black's *The Nice Guys*, the actor made his directorial debut with the 2014 fantasy film *Lost River*, a project he wrote and produced. As a teenager, Gosling also landed the lead role in *Young Hercules*, a kid-friendly fantasy series which ran for 50 episodes in the late Nineties, and saw the young actor portray the titular son of Zeus during his warrior training.

This July, the Hollywood icon will tackle his most significant sci-fi role to date when he starts work on the currently untitled *Blade Runner* sequel. Speaking to **SciFiNow** in Los Angeles, an enthusiastic Gosling explains: "As an actor, to be part of a project like this is unbelievable. It's unreal, but they are being very secret about the project. They put a chip in my

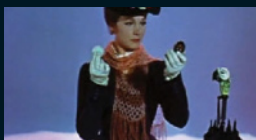
neck. If I say too much, my head will explode! What can I tell you about it? I can say that Harrison Ford will be in the film, and it's an extension of the story. It's not a remake; it's a sequel."

When it comes to the high anticipation for *Blade Runner 2*, Gosling is fully aware of the fervent expectation of the original film's fans. "There's certainly a lot of excitement around the project," he admits. "There's a huge responsibility as well. I think we all feel that, but we're not doing it on our own. We're doing it with Ridley [Scott] and with Harrison's help, and they are experts."

Solid information on the sequel's plot is scarce, but we know that the film is set several decades after the 1982 original, and shooting is expected to start in Budapest this summer. Scott returns as a producer and Gosling will be joined by Ford, who reprises his role as Deckard.

New cast members include *The Princess Bride*'s Robin Wright, *Guardians Of The Galaxy*'s Dave Bautista and Dutch actress Sylvia Hoeks, although their characters are shrouded in secrecy. "I think it's interesting that Denis Villeneuve is directing and that [cinematographer] Roger Deakins is shooting it," teases Gosling. "I'm a fan of everybody involved, so it's incredibly exciting."

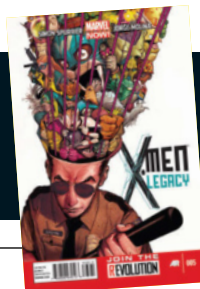
Sci-fi isn't a genre that is new to Gosling, "Growing up, I never really read a lot of science fiction, but I saw a lot of science fiction films – and obviously *Blade Runner* is a seminal science fiction movie," he says. "It really set the bar, and is probably one of the most borrowed-from science fiction films, aside from *Alien*. I don't remember the first time I saw the movie, but I don't think I saw it in a theatre. I think I saw it at home on VHS as a kid. I am a huge fan of the film.



Rob Marshall's *Mary Poppins* sequel starring Emily Blunt and Lin-Manuel Miranda finally has a release date – Christmas 2018.

**9**

The number of episodes *X-Men* spinoff series *Legion* has scored for its first season.

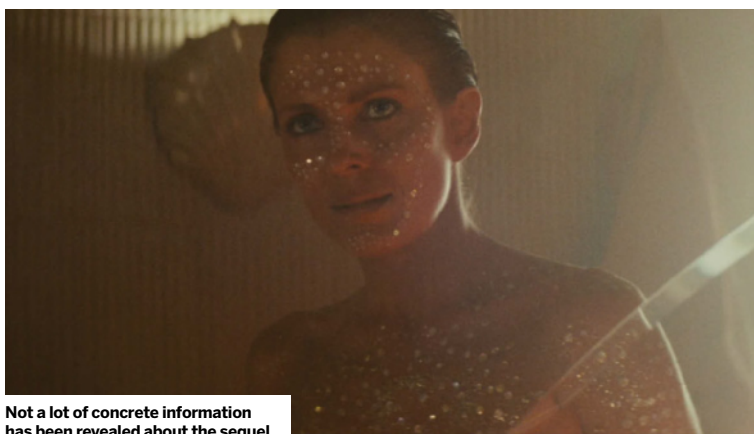
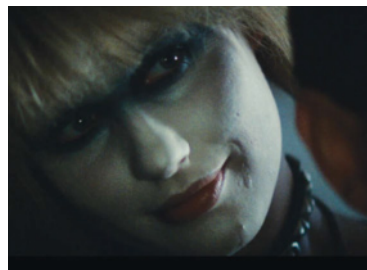


Jeremy Dyson, the co-creator of *The League Of Gentlemen*, has signed up to write the remake series of *Quatermass*, which will tell of "a professor and his daughter who investigate an alien invasion".





Will the sequel demystify the world of *Blade Runner*?



Not a lot of concrete information has been revealed about the sequel.

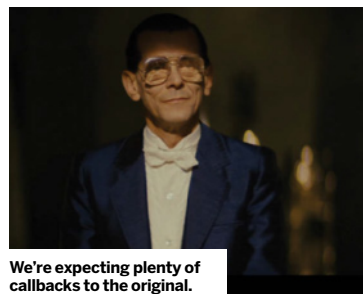
And as a fan of the movie, I was excited to know that Ridley and Harrison wanted to extend that story; that they felt that there was more to tell."

We'll have to wait until 2017 to see Gosling in action alongside Ford, but the Canadian-born actor has nothing but high praise for the 1982 movie and the upcoming sequel: "I think the original is an incredible piece of art, and on every level: stylistically, from a story standpoint, from the performances... Also, there's a melancholy nature to it that I think is in all great science fiction. It's the perfect film, and it obviously had a huge impact on a lot of cinema. It also had a lot of impact on all of us who are working on it now. This is going to be great."

The untitled *Blade Runner* movie will be released in cinemas in October 2017.

**"THEY ARE BEING VERY SECRET ABOUT IT. THEY PUT A CHIP IN MY NECK. IF I SAY TOO MUCH, MY HEAD WILL EXPLODE!"**

RYAN GOSLING



We're expecting plenty of callbacks to the original.

## HOT NEWS

Blade Runner 2/Adventure Time



WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

# WHAT TIME IS IT?

**Adventure Time! We talk to the voice of Finn, Jeremy Shada, to find out what's next**

**Were you surprised by the reaction to *Adventure Time* when it started?**

Yeah, definitely! When you're starting a new show you never really know what the reaction is going to be. You hope for the best, but you also expect it to not go anywhere. The very first time I realised that [the show was huge] was when we went to San Diego Comic-Con and there were thousands of fans screaming about the show. They had their own homemade *Adventure Time* costumes on – we were like, 'Wow! This is definitely a success!'

**What attracted you to the show in the first place?**

The fun thing about *Adventure Time* is it's so surreal. There are a lot of good levels to it. There's a lot of awesome comedy mixed in with real character moments and stuff, which is always a nice mixture. I love to be able to make people laugh, make people cry and have all of that mixed into one awesome show.

**Do you think this is going to be a series that endures after it's over?**

Definitely! I don't think I did at the beginning, but considering how long the show's gone now I think it will have some kind of legacy like those classic shows. It's like this generation's

*SpongeBob SquarePants*. As far as I know, it's going to keep on going for a while too. I think, because the series is so great in general, it's definitely something that could be rewatched into eternity, for sure.

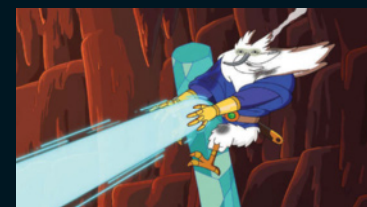
**What can we expect in the future?**

The miniseries 'Stakes' went down super, super well, so I think we're going to be doing a couple more miniseries in the future. People really liked that format, and we like it because it lets us tell longer-form story arcs.

**What's going on with the movie?**

I think it will definitely happen at some point. When that whole thing broke, I think it just leaked so they kind of announced it, it was so far off at that point. They are in the very, very early mapping stages and storyline stages of a feature film.

*Adventure Time* is currently airing on Cartoon Network.



According to Shada, an *Adventure Time* movie is still on the cards.

# 10

The number of films in the works starring Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson, the latest being Shane Black's *Doc Savage*.



Robert Rodriguez's *Battle Angel* film has cast the brilliant Rosa Salazar. She will play Alita, an amnesiac cyborg with kick-ass fighting skills.

# 153 million

The number of Facebook views on the Chewbacca Mask video (at the time of writing).

Mysterious sci-fi *God Particle* recently added Chris O'Dowd to the cast, which already includes Daniel Brühl, Elizabeth Debicki, John Krasinski, Gugu Mbatha-Raw and David Oyelowo.



# THE NEW PREDATOR "WILL BE A PRESENT-DAY SEQUEL"

Director Shane Black explains what fans can expect from the upcoming Predator movie... WORDS ADAM TANSWELL

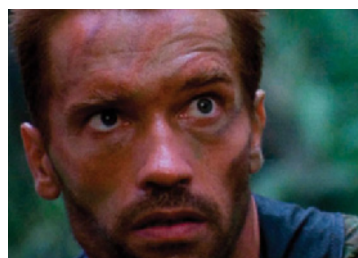


In 1987, Arnold Schwarzenegger famously battled a technologically advanced extraterrestrial with glowing blood and a penchant for camouflage in *Predator* – a movie that would go on to spawn a number of sequels. In 2018 the dreadlocked creature will return, but it's not a reboot, according to the writer/director Shane Black (*Iron Man 3*).

It took a lot of persuasion to get Black to sign up to resurrect the *Predator* franchise, but it's a challenge the iconic filmmaker relishes. "I remember the first

movie having a weird energy about it," he explains. "It was a new idea, but it seemed like an old idea – and people really liked it. However, the magic had lost its lustre. Fox was putting out these movies every couple of years, and they would make a certain amount of money at the box office, but there was no sense that they were striving ambitiously to reinvent the franchise or do something great with it. They were just cheapening the brand."

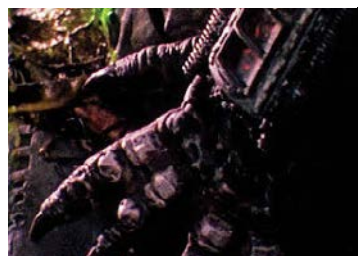
Black has strong plans to turn around the iconic franchise: "We want people



There's no word yet on whether Arnold Schwarzenegger will return as Dutch.



If all goes to plan, Shane Black wants to take the action back to Earth.



Hopefully the Predator won't look too different from its original incarnation.

to say, 'Oh my God... There's a new *Predator* movie out this summer. It's three months away, but let's get our tickets now! We want to line up and be the first to see it.' That was our idea. But how do you make it an event again? How do you see the Predator again with the same sense of mystery, suspense, wonderment and surprise?

"Audiences are so familiar with these make-ups now. You don't want the movie with, 'John, there's an alien in the barn.' And then, 'God dammit... the Predator's at the pigs again!' There's that sense of having seen and done it with these movies, but I want to change that. I want to make it a powerful mystery story that has a sense of *Close Encounters* about it. We're going to peel the onion and find out what's going on, so I really look forward to it.

"I'm getting more excited about it every day," Black continues. "At first they had to talk me into it, but now I think we're good."

When it comes to the plot, Black has a few nuggets of wisdom to share: "It's a sequel set in the present day of 2018, which is when the movie comes out. I don't want to go to another planet right now. I want to stay on Earth, so that's where we'll be."

*The Predator* will be released in cinemas on 2 March 2018.

## WHAT ARE YOU? What Shane Black should take from the previous films

### PREDATOR (1987)

#### KEEP HIM HIDDEN

Apart from the obvious 'be a five-star classic', one of the things the original does best is build tension by keeping the Predator in the shadows for as long as possible.



### PREDATOR 2 (1990)

#### EMBRACE THE TECH

We have a soft spot for the second outing, because it showed off the range of the creature's abilities and weaponry. And it had Bill Paxton.



### PREDATORS (2011)

#### GREAT SUPPORTING CAST

The Robert Rodriguez-produced movie is underrated, boasting an ensemble cast of antiheroes packed with character actors like Walton Goggins and Danny Trejo.



4

The number of *Insidious* chapters now that Adam Robitel has been confirmed to direct.



It looks like Warner Bros has a lot of faith in *Suicide Squad*: Harley Quinn (Margot Robbie) is leading her own film with other female heroes and villains.

5

The fifth *Transformers* film is going to be called *Transformers: The Last Knight*, and will see the return of Josh Duhamel.



*Thor: Ragnarok*'s cast was already off the chain, with Tessa Thompson and Cate Blanchett, but new additions Karl Urban and Jeff Goldblum have made it even better.





## FIVE THINGS WITH DANNY TREJO

Talking vampires, Robert Rodriguez and being badass with *Machete*

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

### 1 Vampire, killer

Everyone's favourite badass is back in the new season of Robert Rodriguez's *From Dusk Till Dawn*, playing undead bounty hunter The Regulator. "I don't negotiate; I regulate," he growls. "I love it!" How did he get involved? Well, that's pretty simple: it sounds like Rodriguez didn't have much of a choice. "Shit, I'd better be involved in everything Robert Rodriguez does!" laughs Trejo. "I love it man, he's awesome, I love working for him, and his ideas are so over the top. I love him!"

### 2 Trejo and Rodriguez

The pair have been one of our favourite movie-making partnerships since *Desperado* back in 1996. From *Spy Kids* to *Machete*, Rodriguez has given the actor some of his greatest roles. "I first met Robert when I walked into his office in Venice on Market Street for *Desperado*," he remembers. "He said, 'Wow, you remind me of the bad guys in my high school!' And I said, 'I am the bad guys in your high school!' So we got along pretty good!"

### 3 Machete kills

Trejo got to lead his own action franchise with *Machete*, the tale of a double-crossed Federale who proceeds to take down everyone who wronged him. Twice. "Machete is my favourite character I've ever played" he laughs. "That's my idea of a movie. It's not a real-thinking movie; you just go enjoy it!" As for the long-awaited *Machete Kills In Space*, Trejo tells us that he's raring to go. "Well, I'm hoping! I'm telling [Rodriguez] to hurry up. Do it, Robert!"

### 4 Playing a type

If you're watching Trejo, he's more than likely playing a badass. "I started out doing drug counselling when I got out of prison," he tells us. "I worked on a movie in 1985, and accidentally got into the movies, and from 1985 to 1993 they made a shitload of gangbanger and killer movies, so I was always Inmate #1! Finally someone said, 'Aren't you afraid of being stereotyped?' 'As what?' 'Well, you're always playing the mean Chicano dude with tattoos!' 'Well, I am the mean Chicano dude with tattoos!'"

### 5 For the fans

Trejo has a devoted fan base, and is very active on social media. "Well, my fans, they're the reason I'm here," he enthuses. "I go to a lot of Comic-Cons because I get to see and mingle and hang out with my fans." One thing's for sure: he's going to keep making crowd-pleasers. "I just finished *Death Race 4*, I love that movie! Cars and explosions and guns and babes. I always say, 'It takes three Bs to make a good movie: Babes, bullets and blood!'"

*From Dusk Till Dawn*: Season Two is available on DVD and digital download now.

© Rex

**11**  
YEARS

How long Guillermo del Toro's new series *Carnival Row* has been on the cards for.



Things are getting even more super for *Supergirl*, with Superman himself set to make an appearance.



**8**

Cast members confirmed for the *Blade Runner* sequel, the latest addition being Mackenzie Davis.



Michael Barbieri has been added to the cast of *Spider-Man: Homecoming*, with Marvel now facing more whitewashing backlash.



# "WE DIDN'T KNOW IT WOULD GET THIS HEAVY!"

The *Venture Bros'* creator Jackson Publick on the evolution of a cult classic WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

**T**here aren't a lot of shows like *The Venture Bros.* Since debuting in 2003 on Adult Swim, the riff on adventure stories from the Fifties and Sixties created a hilarious and fiendishly detailed world layered with in-jokes, references and deep emotional pain, and it has continued to develop. With its sixth season just finished in the US, creator Jackson Publick tells us that it still surprises him.

"Oh yeah," he laughs. "I knew it would evolve, but I didn't know to what extent. It's not the snarky little parody show that it used to be, and it's more character-driven. We were always invested in our characters; we always knew that we wanted to be the kind of show that cares about its

continuity. We just didn't know it would get this... heavy!"

This has been most obvious in the characters of Hank and Dean, Dr Venture's sons, whose development has been one of the show's most consistently hilarious elements. "I personally have fallen in love with Hank," Publick tells us. "We've given him some pretty strange obsessions, and he'll constantly drop pop-cultural phrases that just shouldn't have been part of his childhood at all. Hank's a little crazy! Dean gets upset and gets messed up by everything, and Hank just goes, 'This is cool!' Hank's just watching the show, you know?"

However, Rusty Venture and The Monarch are still absolutely stuck in their

never-ending cycles of ambition, hubris and disappointment. "Rusty is a victim of the world he was born into," explains Publick. "Sometimes he tries to escape it, but in our newest season he sort of re-commits to it, once in a while, we give him a sad little victory, and the same thing happens to the Monarch. Things go badly for a while, and instead of giving up they decide to double their efforts. 'Wait a minute, I'm the Monarch! It's time to chase Dr Venture!' And we're constantly taking that away from him!"

Catch Seasons 1-4 of *The Venture Bros* for free now on Spotify mobile, with all-new episodes from Season Five currently rolling out every Friday.

Creator Jackson Publick has shepherded the show's evolution.



The *Venture Bros* has rightfully garnered acclaim over the years.



## THE VENTURE BROS EXPLAINED!

### Here's what you need to know

#### So... who are the Venture Bros?

Hank and Dean Venture, two teenage boys who are the sons of super-scientist Dr Rusty Venture. They're also clones of the originals, created by Rusty after they kept dying.

#### And Rusty's a good guy?

Well, that depends on your definition. He's kind of a terrible human being in a lot of ways. It's mainly his dad's fault, though. He was the original brilliant scientist adventurer, and Rusty's a bit of a failure. And he's unhappy about it.

#### A bit of a failure?

Yep. Luckily his friends include necromancers, former boy geniuses, and brilliant bodyguards like Brock Samson, who's now gone back to being a secret agent and has been replaced by Sergeant Hatred, who has some pretty serious demons of his own.

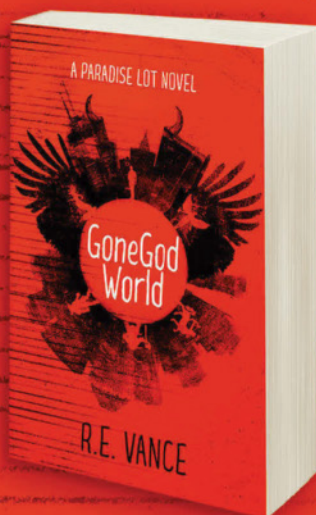
#### So who are the bad guys?

The Monarch is Rusty's arch-nemesis, although no one knows exactly why. He's got a whole legion of henchman and Dr Girlfriend helping him out. There are also various villainous organisations involved, including The Guild Of Calamitous Intent, and lots of monsters, supervillains, mutants and David Bowie.

The gods are gone.  
All of them



OUT NOW



"GoneGodDamn, I was completely charmed by this story."

"I was immediately pulled into the gritty, beautiful world which Vance creates."  
*Celtic Frog Reviews*





# 400 DAYS OF SPACE

Brandon Routh talks tackling new genres, the impending Apocalypse and pretending to travel in space WORDS JEN NEAL

**F**ormer Kal-El Brandon Routh has followed up roles in *Chuck*, *Arrow* and *Legends Of Tomorrow* with claustrophobic sci-fi thriller *400 Days*. Working alongside CW co-stars Caity Lotz and Tom Cavanagh, along with comedian Dane Cook, his latest project sees a space simulation mission venture into dark territory, resulting in paranoia and recriminations. We spoke to him about this fascinating psychological sci-fi thriller...

## What was it about *400 Days* that drew you to the project?

The psychological thriller aspect – I've yet to do a project of that subject matter. I think it's incredibly intriguing as a human being to know what I would do in extreme situations, and on the day as an actor I thought it would be something fun to do. And the cast and characters that were in the film were also appealing to me.

## Did the confined set space help build the tension as an actor?

It was definitely an element. The set design was absolutely an element to the

claustrophobic nature, the isolated feeling of the movie and the emotional journey the characters go on. It was not a big ship at all. The fact that it's light and sterile also does something, perhaps subconsciously that you can't put your finger on. It makes you a little on edge.

You have to be able to create your own image of what it is, because it's not giving you anything. It can lead you to go into your imagination easily and create your own story, which may or may not be true.

## Did the external sets add to the scare factor?

Yeah, it added a pretty good scope to the film. The cinematography adds to that, and the feel of the creepiness added another. The set was another character really, especially when we get out of the ship, and it's dark and there is nothing and we're going into the creepy town. It's set back in time, and we don't necessarily know where we are when we go underground. There is this new place. Was this supposed to be here? I've never seen this weird town, what is it?

## How much research did you do into the MARS-500 project?

This was triggered by the director Matt Osterman watching and seeing some of these actual European and Russian space missions teaming up. I watched quite a few of the videos, and it was just fascinating. Thankfully, their space was very different! They didn't have all these challenges.

But still, just watching these guys have this experience was cool. You kind of wanted them to fall apart, because that would have been interesting, but it was also kind of awesome that they weren't. I want them to make it, because some day we probably will have to make that big travel time. I hope that we are able to.

## *400 Days* has a very ambiguous ending, did you see it coming?

No! I like my movie-going experiences to be neat and tidy. Not that I want them to give me the answer, but I want them to



allow me to find out the answer – at least give me a yes, or kind of a no, more firmly.

But that was the intention of our director, that we didn't want to force-feed the answer and see what they would come up with, as the whole movie is about psyche, to a large degree.

## How did this experience compare to your current project?

The fact that *400 Days* is a small independent film mirrors *Legends Of Tomorrow* in a way, not in that it is a small independent TV show [laughs], but that the schedule is very condensed and short, much like shooting a small indie. You have to shoot very quickly and move through things, so that made it similar.

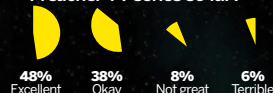
*400 Days* will air on Syfy in October.



It turns out Han didn't shoot first. His solo movie is already in pre-production, but it won't actually start shooting until January next year.



What are your thoughts on the *Preacher* TV series so far?



We're going back to Jason's beginnings in David Bruckner's new *Friday The 13th* reboot, but they're getting a makeover. Producer Brad Full describes the film as an 'origin-ish'.

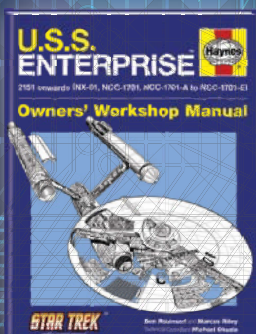
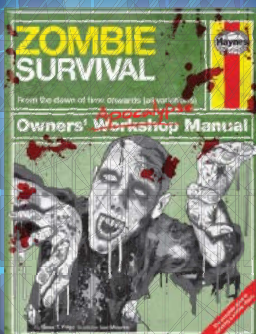
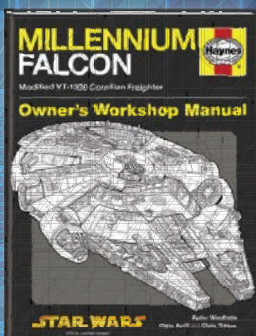
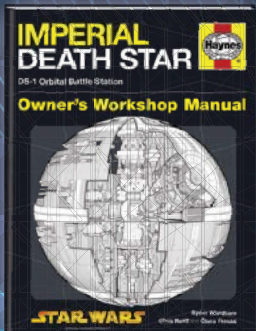
# 10

The number of episodes it took for A&E to cancel *Damien*.





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# BEST OF THE BILLBOARDS

Celebrating the best, worst and weirdest movie posters out there

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER



## BEYOND THE GATES

Just look at it. The colour scheme, brilliant illustrations and giant, floating Barbara Crampton head suspended in a TV set is everything we want from a film poster. Although *Beyond The Gates* is a new one, the whole thing just screams out 'campy Eighties horror fun'. And let's not overlook that amazing tagline.

**WEIRDEST**



## PERSONAL SHOPPER

The poster for Olivier Assayas's *Personal Shopper* isn't as weird as some – there are no sexy orcs or trippy kaleidoscopic effects – but it doesn't really tell us anything about the film. From this, all we know is that Kristen Stewart will be in it, and she is going to wear a jumper.



## STAR TREK BEYOND

There's a theme forming. This beautiful poster harkens back to *Star Trek* times of yore, when the portraits were illustrated and the colours were loud.



## THE BFG

This one makes it to the list for nostalgia's sake. It's reminiscent of the original cover, and is that a nod to *Pride Rock* in the background?

## SATANIC

This new *Satanic* poster would be kind of creepy if it wasn't so terrible. The black eyes and sewn-up mouth look like they were done with a Snapchat filter. And what's the deal with the spooky hand and the pentagram-inspired 'A'? Been there, done that so many times. There is nothing new here, and there is not a whole lot to get excited for. We can only hope their next attempt doesn't rely on popular apps for its main body.



# 6 THINGS WE KNOW ABOUT THE DARK TOWER

Start following  
Stephen King's long-awaited epic

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

## THE TWO LEADS ARE PERFECT

Javier Bardem and Russell Crowe were linked to adaptations that fell apart, but we're excited that Idris Elba is taking the role of Roland Deschain, the Gunslinger. He's hunting The Man in Black, who will be played by Matthew McConaughey – a brilliant choice.



© Jessica Lea/DFID



© Avda/Avda photo

## STEPHEN KING APPROVES

The author has been vocal about his support for this long-awaited adap, including the casting of Elba in the role of written-as-white Roland. He says his one condition is that it starts with *The Gunslinger's* opening line: "The man in black fled across the desert, and the gunslinger followed." Which is fair enough.



© Pinguino

## IT'S NOT EXACTLY LIKE THE NOVELS

It isn't a film of *The Gunslinger*, the first novel in the series. King has told *EW* that it picks up "in medias res," at an unspecified point, while others have suggested that it could be a continuation instead. All we know is that some of it takes place in our world, as well as Mid-World.



## THE DIRECTOR IS GREAT

The man taking responsibility for these decisions is Danish filmmaker Nikolaj Arcel. He's best-known for his Oscar-nominated drama *A Royal Affair*, starring Mads Mikkelsen and Alicia Vikander, and been attached to some high-profile gigs before. It's his biggest film to date, but he's got further than anyone else.

## NO ONE KNOWS HOW MANY FILMS

There's currently no clue as to how many films Sony will be hoping to do. It's still a fairly risky, big-budget proposition, so the studio will probably wait to see how this one does before greenlighting sequels, but there's apparently still some hope that the mooted TV series could eventually happen too.

## SUPPORTING CAST IS GREAT

There are some strong names joining Elba and McConaughey. Abbey Lee is playing Tirana, Jackie Earle Haley is vampiric Richard Sayre, Fran Kranz is Pimli, Claudia Kim is Arra Champignon, young Tom Taylor is Jake Chambers, and Katheryn Winnick is playing an unknown role.



© Eva Rimaldi

The Dark Tower will be released in cinemas on 17 February 2017.





**COMICS UNCOVERED 2016**

**DAYS OF FUTURE NOW**  
Here are some upcoming UK conventions that you can't afford to miss...

# COMIC CONVENTION CORNER

Organiser Shane Chebsey tells us why you must visit Shrewsbury International Comic Art Festival and ICE

## What can you tell us about Shrewsbury and ICE?

Both events are very focused on comics as opposed to movies and TV, and have a real sense of occasion for comics fans.

First up is the Shrewsbury International Comic Art Festival. It has a real European festival atmosphere, and is quite different to anything else on the comic calendar. International Comic Expo (ICE) is sort of an annual general meeting for the comic industry in the UK, with the public invited to enjoy the fun.

With over 45 top guests and over 120 exhibitors, it also encompasses the annual International Comic Industry Conference (Comic Uncovered), which is focused on helping aspiring creators find work.

## What makes them stand out from other cons on the circuit?

Shrewsbury is unique, as it is integrated with the Shrewsbury Fields Forever music festival. Therefore, unlike other conventions, creators and publishers can expect crowds of potential new fans, many of who may be exposed to comics for the first time. Fans also get to enjoy one of the most diverse music festivals in the country, with over 100 music acts including the Happy Mondays, Dizzee Rascal and Sunshine Underground.

What makes ICE stand out is the outstanding quality of events that complement the stellar guest list and diverse exhibitors. There is a full day of panels, talks and guest interviews

planned for the Saturday, and the conference on the Sunday is unique, as no other event in the UK devotes an entire day to aspiring creators.

## What notable attractions are planned?

The legendary Howard Chaykin is headlining in Shrewsbury. Other top names include Croatian artist Goran Parlov, and *Judge Dredd* co-creator John Wagner. They'll be joined by another 20 top names and a host of emerging artists and publishers. We are also planning live art events.

Guests at ICE include Netflix's *Daredevil* writers Christos Gage and Ruth Fletcher Gage and *DC Bombshells* writer Marguerite Bennett, along with Charlie Adlard (*The Walking Dead*), Andy Diggie (*Green Arrow*) and Peter Milligan (*X-Force*), to name just a few.

## What is the best thing about running a con?

It's all about meeting amazing people, including creators, cosplayers, fans and retailers. I've met so many lifelong friends through running conventions. It's also very satisfying to expand the reach of my favourite medium. Comics tell stories in a way no other medium can. I love bringing that magic to those who may never have experienced it, and conventions allow me to do that. It's incredibly fulfilling.

**Shrewsbury International Comic Art Festival 2016**  
15-17 July  
The Quarry Park, Shrewsbury  
tinyurl.com/hfchfk3  
Price: £50-£68 for weekend (includes entry to Shrewsbury Fields Forever Festival)

**ICE (International Comic Expo) 2016**  
10 September  
The Studio, Canon Street, Birmingham  
internationalcomicexpo.wordpress.com  
Price: Early bird tickets are £6-£12



**Roll Out Roll Call**  
8-10 July  
Radisson Blu Edwardian, Heathrow  
www.allthecoolstuff.co.uk  
Price: £25-225.  
Under 12s go free\*  
Meet up with *Transformers* and *GI Joe* fans from around the world at this unique event.

**Sci-Fi South West 2**  
9-10 July  
Civic Centre, Trowbridge  
www.scifisouthwest.co.uk  
Price: £5-10  
Under 5s go free\*  
Sophie Aldred and Virginia Hey headline the second year of Trowbridge's premier con. Explore the TARDIS and more.

**'Geeks' Lincoln Comic-Con**  
9-10 July  
Epic Centre, Lincoln  
tinyurl.com/znc5rht  
Price: £12-20.  
Under 5s go free\*  
Colin Baker and Sylvester McCoy are just a few of the names attending this fantastic con.

**HorrorCon UK 2016**  
9-10 July  
Magna Science Adventure Centre, Rotherham  
www.horrorconventions.co.uk  
Price: £36-42  
Meet with like-minded fans at the UK's friendliest horror convention. *Hellraiser's* Doug Bradley will be present.

**Star Wars Celebration**  
15-17 July  
ExCel Centre, London Centre,  
www.starwarscelebration.com  
Price: £30 per day (limited availability)  
From a galaxy far, far away comes the ultimate *Star Wars* fan event, with Carrie Fisher and Mark Hamill in attendance.

**Lavecon 2016**  
16-17 July  
Sedgebrook Hall Hotel, Northampton  
laveradio.com/lavecon-2016  
Price: £30-70  
Board gaming, live role play, cosplay, guest readings, workshops and more are present here.

**London Film & Comic Con**  
29-31 July  
Olympia, London  
www.londonfilmandcomiccon.com  
Price: £58-250  
The UK's biggest film and comic convention has one of its best guest lists yet, including Ron Perlman and Mads Mikkelsen.

**AmeCon**  
29-31 July  
Warwick Arts Centre  
amecon.org  
Price: £48-£85  
The UK's largest residential convention dedicated to Japanese animation and comics, this is a must-attend for anime fans.

**MCM Manchester Comic Con**  
30-31 July  
Manchester Central  
www.mcmcomiccon.com/manchester  
Price: £22  
This month, MCM decamps to Manchester with the likes of Peter Davison and Warwick Davis in tow.

**Preston Comic Con**  
6 August  
Preston Guild Hall  
www.prestoncomiccon.co.uk  
Price: £4-12  
Lancashire's finest convention features names from some of the biggest film and TV franchises in the world, like *Harry Potter* and *Doctor Who*.

**Alton Comic Con**  
6 August  
Alton  
www.nerdageddon.co.uk  
Price: Free  
Lovers of TV film, sci-fi, cosplay and graphic novels absolutely cannot afford to miss this free event. Literally.

**Dublin Comic Con**  
6-7 August  
Convention Centre, Dublin  
www.dublincomiccon.com  
Price: €20. Under 3s go free\*  
With guests, interactive sets, prop displays and exhibitors and artists, Ireland shows how to do cons the right way.

Want to see your event published here? Contact us at [scifinow@imagine-publishing.co.uk](mailto:scifinow@imagine-publishing.co.uk)

\* Terms and conditions apply





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For news and reviews of all the biggest films in science fiction, fantasy and horror, subscribe to SciFiNow's YouTube channel! Stay up to date any time and in any place (or any place there's Wi-Fi or 4G anyway).

This month, Jen Neal spoke to *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out Of The Shadows* star Stephen Amell about the turtles, *Arrow*, his Canadian roots, and who he'd pick to be his tech geek BFF between Donatello and Felicity Smoak.

Watch the truth bombs drop with our '5 Things You Need To Know About' video series, where we tear apart all the hottest genre blockbusters, including *Captain America: Civil War*, *The Huntsman: Winter's War*, *Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice*, *Deadpool*, *10 Cloverfield Lane*, *Mockingjay: Part Two* and *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*.

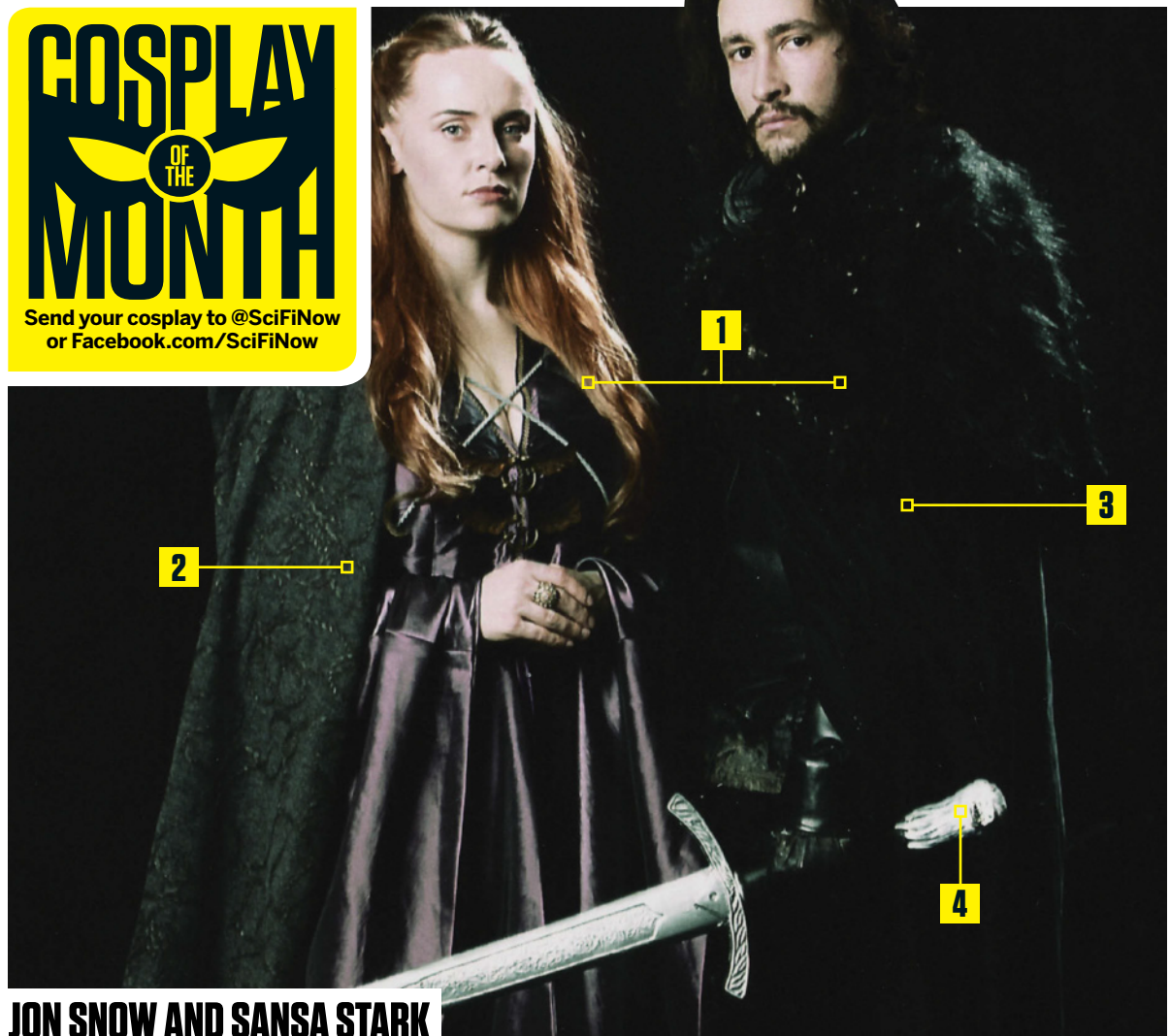
We also delve into some of the more obscure gems of genre. Jonathan Hatfull talks to Michael Shannon about fantastic sci-fi *Midnight Special*, while Katherine McLaughlin chats with Sarah Wayne Callies and director Johannes Roberts about supernatural horror *The Other Side Of The Door*. We also head to the red carpet to talk *The Last Witch Hunter* with Vin Diesel, Michael Caine, Rose Leslie and more.

If television is more your speed, join Poppy-Jay Palmer as she hits Google Hangout to discuss Netflix's intense sci-fi thriller *Sense8* and all our favourite scenes with all eight of the main cast.

But that's not all. Subscribe today and keep calling back for news, reviews, interviews and more in a year that's jam-packed with amazing genre films and TV to get excited about!

## COSPLAY OF THE MONTH

Send your cosplay to @SciFiNow or Facebook.com/SciFiNow



### JON SNOW AND SANSA STARK

**COSPLAYER:** OLIVER HOLLINGDALE AND KIARNE CAMP **FROM:** WEST SUSSEX, WORTHING **PHOTO:** BRIGHTON FILM AND COMIC CON **TWITTER:** @DIRECTOROLI, @KIARNE\_CAMP

#### 1 THE CHARACTERS

We believe Jon Snow is the one to unite the north, and we are sure Sansa's involvement and evolution will play a key role in many episodes to come! They are both characters that have suffered immensely, and have had very interesting storylines. Such intricate transitions captured our interest in wanting to cosplay these characters, so we hope we did them justice.

#### 2 THE COSTUME

Jon Snow's costume is a costly one. However, mine was made on a very tight budget, so it meant that I really had to rub mud and sweat into it. I think the weathered look makes it feel more lived-in and authentic. For Sansa, there were a lot of costumes to choose from. I decided on the one that I felt we could do justice to and that was recognisable.

#### 3 THE DESIGN

The only thing we had to adapt to was figuring out how to put together costumes on a limited budget, as well as making them true to the series, which could have been quite tricky. The fact that everyone who has seen our cosplays says that we actually resemble Kit Harington and Sophie Turner was a big help, and added more validity to our costumes.

#### 4 THE ACCESSORIES

The hardest part was sculpting Long Claw. Cons have strict policies regarding weapons, so I made a safe plastic replica. Another big challenge was creating Sansa's brooches. I had to use cutters to cut through the copper piping before flattening them and sketching out the wing pattern. Finally, I soldered the pieces together to complete the product.

## HOT TOPICS

Your most-read posts on SciFiNow.co.uk



**RABID REMAKE: THE SOSKA SISTERS SPILL ALL**

[tinyurl.com/jzt8byd](http://tinyurl.com/jzt8byd)



**CLEVERMAN "WILL RESONATE STRONGLY"**

[tinyurl.com/hcnbxxz](http://tinyurl.com/hcnbxxz)



**OUTCAST: PHILIP GLENISTER EXCLUSIVE**

[tinyurl.com/zal7zcd](http://tinyurl.com/zal7zcd)



**HALLOWEEN SEQUEL COMING**

[tinyurl.com/zobfu5s](http://tinyurl.com/zobfu5s)



**DAMIEN SEASON 2 CANCELLED BY A&E**

[tinyurl.com/hrex7cm](http://tinyurl.com/hrex7cm)





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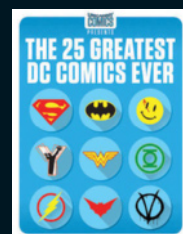
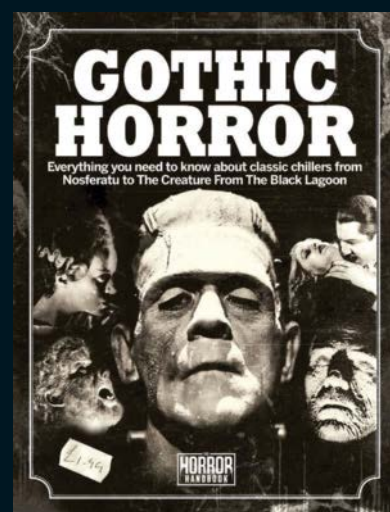
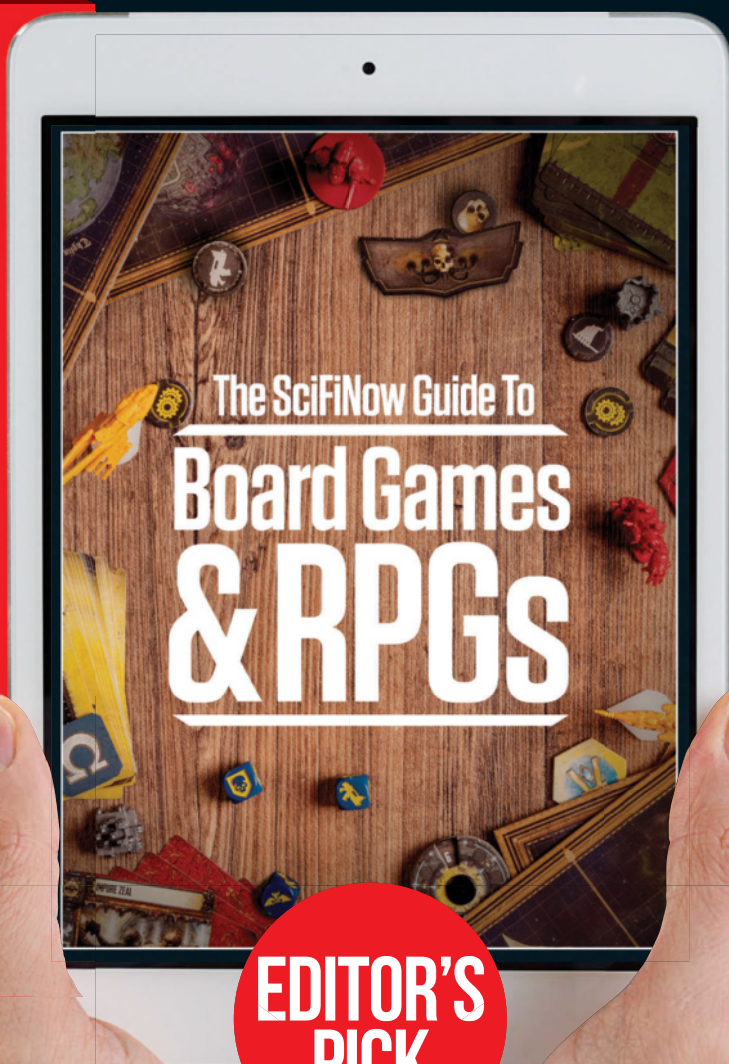
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# COVER FEATURE

Suicide Squad

“WHEN YOU GET TO NOT GIVE A FUCK, YOU’RE SO FREE. YOU’RE UNBOUND; YOU DON’T HAVE TO CARRY THE MORAL CENTRE OF THE PIECE.”

WILL SMITH

## ARKHAM PATIENT FORM

Patient number  
00681107861

Patient name:  
Unknown

Known associates:  
Harley Quinn

Alias  
Joker

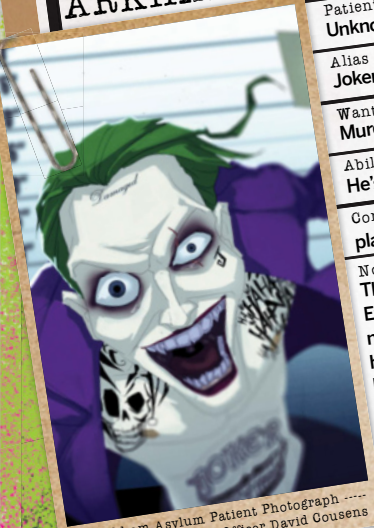
Wanted for:  
Murder, armed robbery, torture, arms dealing

Abilities:  
He’s really, really crazy

Confiscated: Button flower, false teeth, water pistol, playing cards, knives and lint

Notes:  
There is no one in Gotham City more dangerous. Efforts to uncover his history, or even his real name, have proved to be completely pointless and he fits his story to the listener. His twisted games have cost countless lives. He’s unpredictable and psychotic. If he gets out, there’s only one man who can bring him down. Don’t let him get out.

First appearance:  
Batman #1 (1940)



..... Arkham Asylum Patient Photograph .....  
Illustration by Intake Officer David Cousins



# BAD GUYS DO IT WELL

WE SIT DOWN WITH THE CAST OF SUICIDE SQUAD TO  
FIND OUT WHY SUPERVILLAINS HAVE MORE FUN

**S**UPERHERO MOVIES ARE ALL ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY RIGHT NOW. CAPTAIN AMERICA AND IRON MAN WENT TO WAR OVER IT, BATMAN BEAT THE LIVING SHIT out of Superman because of it, and even though his entire marketing campaign was based around not giving a damn about it, even Deadpool ended up using his powers to do the right thing. It all comes back to what Uncle Ben told Peter Parker before he bled out on the cold New York sidewalk: if you get the power, then you get the responsibility.

But that's for heroes. Heroes have to live with that burden. Villains? A different matter entirely. "It was so much

fun!" exclaims Cara Delevingne, one of the stars of *Suicide Squad*, with a grin.

"The thing that's great is when you say, 'A bad guy,' the difference is that characters who are morally centred are who the movie hangs on, right?" asks Will Smith. "I call it first guy, second guy. So in *Men In Black*, for example, the spine is Tommy Lee Jones, so the second guy gets to not give a fuck. When you get to not give a fuck as an actor, you're so free. You're unbound; you don't have to carry the moral centre of the piece. So for me in this one, to be a dude that can shoot somebody, kill somebody, can help or not help... the second guy gets to wild out for the whole movie. Anything you do, you don't have to be redeemed!"

"But here, it's like eight second guys!" adds Joel Kinnaman, to roars of approval from the room. We're sitting in a fancy Las Vegas hotel suite with the members of Task Force X, who have flown in to present some new footage to CinemaCon and show off the characters who will bring a little much-needed anti-heroism to the DC cinematic universe.

These are the 'worst of the worst', the bad men and women strong-armed into doing some 'good' by government stooge Amanda Waller (Viola Davis), which also means facing their almost certain death. There's gleefully psychotic Harley Quinn (Margot Robbie), master assassin Deadshot (Smith), split-personality witch Enchantress (Delevingne), selfish shitbag Captain Boomerang (Jai Courtney), reptilian cannibal Killer Croc (Adewale ➤



Viola Davis as Amanda Waller, the one charged with bringing the 'team' together.

WORDS  
JONATHAN  
HATFULL



# COVER FEATURE

Suicide Squad



Jay Hernandez as Chato Santana, aka El Diablo.



Joel Kinnaman as Rick Flag, one of the team's few genuine 'good guys'.

➤ Akinuoye-Agbaje), guilt-ridden pyromaniac El Diablo (Jay Hernandez), and violent rope expert Slipknot (Adam Beach), and they're kept in line by short-fused company man Colonel Rick Flag (Kinnaman) and his bodyguard Katana (Karen Fukuhara), who collects the souls of the people she kills in her sword.

**A**LTHOUGH KINNAMAN HAS JUST DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS SUICIDE SQUAD'S SPINE ("I'M TOMMY LEE JONES!" HE AFFIRMS), HE'S VERY MUCH

one of the gang. Jared Leto is noticeably quieter, but then he's been something of a stranger to the rest of his cast mates. "I didn't meet him until two days ago," Smith tells us. "Two days ago was the first time it was like, 'Heeey, what's up, I'm Will!' And we worked together for six months, seven months, and it was really the first time we ever had a conversation."

We'll get to Leto's method madness in a moment, because the most striking impression from the rest of the room is sheer excitement, and it's easy to see why. With DC's upcoming slate currently under some intense scrutiny (word of Warner Bros' DC film division reshuffle is still trickling out at the time of writing), *Suicide Squad* occupies a privileged position. Unlike *Batman V Superman*, this movie doesn't have to tee up a franchise. This is the one that gets to cut loose and have some fun, which you have to imagine is partly why it drew in such an incredible cast. That, and David Ayer.

"I never really thought to myself, 'Oh, I want to be in a comic-book movie,'" explains Margot Robbie. "When I first heard about it I was about to do a different project, and they said, 'Before you sign on for that, would you consider playing Harley Quinn?' I was like, 'Okay, can I read the script?' And they were like, 'There's no script.' 'Okay, is there anyone attached?' 'No one attached.' '... Is there a director?' 'Yeah, David Ayer.' And I was like 'Well, I'm in!' And that was kind of it! I didn't sign on to do a comic-book movie, nor had I ever expected to. But if I was to do it, David was the guy that I wanted to do it with."

Ayer fits very neatly into Warner Bros' much-publicised decision to hire 'filmmakers' for their comic-book

movies. Along with the A-list casting, there's a statement of intent there to show that they're taking this stuff seriously and that they're bringing in the necessary behind-the-camera talent to craft something more nourishing than a pure popcorn movie. Looking back at the *Fury* director's work from the good (*Harsh Times*) to the bad (*Sabotage*), it's easy to see what makes him an excellent fit for this material. If you're looking for a guy who can take a bunch of bad, bad people and make a highly entertaining ensemble action film out of their misadventures, look no further.

"That was the attraction for me," agrees Smith. "To make a comic-book movie with a director who's only focused on acting. That's a really rare combination. I've worked with a lot of directors who are much more concerned about the comic-book part than the acting part, so with David Ayer, his central focus is getting a performance out of the actors and having us collide and create in really interesting ways. So he's an actor-friendly comic-book movie director."

That 'actor-friendly' element is particularly noticeable in Ayer's approach to the character of Waylon Jones, aka Killer Croc. There was some discussion of how 'comic book' Ayer would go ➤➤

ARKHAM PATIENT FORM		Patient number 00066489645
Patient name: Dr Harleen Quinzel		
Alias Harley Quinn	Known associates: Joker	
Wanted for: Murder, armed robbery, general chaos		
Abilities: None beyond creative and athletic mayhem		
Confiscated: Baseball bat, clown make-up, killer high-heels, knives, a circus sledgehammer		
Notes: Dr Quinzel was one of our brightest young minds here at Arkham before she got too invested in the case of Gotham's most dangerous criminal: The Joker. That lunatic fractured her psyche and, obsessed with him, she joined him in his life of crime. Don't let her giddy demeanour trick you; she's absolutely deadly and totally insane.		
First appearance: Batman: The Animated Series; 'Joker's Favor'		

..... Arkham Asylum Patient Photograph .....  
Illustration by Intake Officer David Cousins



“THE JOKER FEEDS OFF RESENTMENT... THE MORE RESENTMENT, CONFLICT AND ENEMIES HE GETS, THE MORE FULFILLED HE FEELS”  
JARED LETO

6'0"

5'6"

5'0"

Patient #00014532247  
 Lawton, Floyd  
 "Deadshot"  
 Arkham Asylum

..... Arkham Asylum Patient Photograph .....  
 Illustration by Intake Officer David Gousens

ARKHAM PATIENT FORM

Patient number  
 00014532247

Patient name:  
 Floyd Lawton

Alias  
 Deadshot

Known associates:  
 Zoe (daughter)

Wanted for:  
 Murder

Abilities:  
 Superhuman marksmanship

Confiscated: Cybernetic eye, white mask, sniper rifle, wrist guns, a lot of bullets

Notes:  
 A killer for hire, Floyd has made a name for himself as one of Gotham's most lethal assassins. Although he shows no remorse for his crimes and has professed a desire for a truly spectacular death, he does have a weakness when it comes to his daughter. Probably the most stable member of this group. Just.

First appearance:  
 Batman #59

## HERE'S HARLEY!

### GLASSES, CLIPBOARD

Harley was once a psychiatrist at Arkham who treated the Joker, until she went insane and became his loving sidekick. These days, she's all about the chaos.



### JOKER GRIN

Mr J! The love story between Harley and her puddin' is one of DC's most iconic relationships. Sure, they fight – a lot – but she'll always forgive him, even if she's shown she doesn't always need him.



### HARLEQUIN OUTFIT

It's not just for the clever name. Harley's love of theatrics is one of her most endearing attributes, and she's not shy about making a grand entrance. For her enjoyment rather than anyone else's.



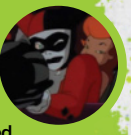
### SLEDGEHAMMER

Harley's signature weapon tells you everything you need to know. Sure, she's funny and great fun to spend time with, but she will absolutely kill you.



### POISON IVY

The Harley/Ivy team-up made for one of the animated series' best episodes and some fantastic storylines. Recently confirmed as a non-monogamous romantic couple, they're perfect for each other.



### HEART

As violent and murderous as Harley is, there is a heart to the character. Leaving aside her love for Mr J, some of her most entertaining antics are driven by a skewed sense of social justice, and the animated series hinted at her tragic past.





# COVER FEATURE

Suicide Squad



## ARKHAM PATIENT FORM

Patient number  
00026571366

Patient name:  
George 'Digger' Harkness

Alias  
Captain Boomerang

Known associates:  
None

Wanted for:  
Murder, armed robbery, treachery

Abilities:  
Lethal boomerang skills

Confiscated:  
Boomerangs, trench coat, lighter, beer cans

Notes:  
The reason for Harkness' lack of associates is because no one can stand him. Not only is he abrasive; he's entirely self-serving and willing to hurt others for petty reasons. He's a skilled fighter and a deadly weapon, but totally unreliable and prone to drinking heavily. Doesn't like people laughing at him, and he doesn't like Deadshot.

First appearance:  
Flash #117

with the character. Would they go for the mob enforcer with a skin condition, or a fully fledged rampaging crocodile? From what we've seen, the film is definitely not afraid to embrace the more magical elements of the comics: Katana can indeed communicate with the souls of her victims that she keeps in her sword, Enchantress is definitely a full-blown witch, the trailers are full of portals and monsters, and Killer Croc is more animal than not.

"[David Ayer] had a vision of bringing Croc to the screen which had never been done before," explains Akinuoye-Agbaje. "He could have easily CGI'd it, but he wanted an actor inside it because he said he wanted to show the souls of these characters. And to be in a movie with Will Smith, Jared Leto, Margot, Cara, Joel - it's a brilliant stage to be on, and you just want to be able to do your best stuff with the best guys!"

That ensemble cast is definitely one of *Suicide Squad's* biggest draws. While Marvel (for the most part) tends to avoid

casting from the A-list, Warner Bros goes for the big names. Still, no matter how many awards you've won and no matter which legendary filmmakers you've worked with, playing iconic characters comes with pressure.

On the plus side, most of the characters haven't made the jump to the big screen before, meaning that there's no one performance to break free from. Harley Quinn is obviously a beloved character, in large part due to Arleen Sorkin's incredible voice work in the animated series and videogames, but Robbie says that she felt a degree of freedom.

"It was kind of uncharted territory to play characters who hadn't been played before," she recalls. "But at the same time I felt a great responsibility to do justice to the character for all the fans that were eager to see it. I read a bunch of forums, and tried to pick out the key things that people really loved about Harley, and make sure I delivered that while also creating a truthful person with David. The rest of it was a creation, completely."



## ARKHAM PATIENT FORM

Patient number  
00012896435

Patient name:  
Christopher Weiss

Alias  
Slipknot

Known associates:  
Multiplex

Wanted for:  
Murder

Abilities:  
Can and will do anything with ropes

Confiscated:  
Ropes (various)

Notes:  
A former chemical plant employee, Slipknot is a highly unpleasant individual. He's obsessed with ropes, and can use them for nearly anything. These skills have made him one of the most in-demand assassins in the world, and he's unpredictable and violent to boot. He's not exactly the luckiest guy, and he's got some bad history with Harkness.

First appearance:  
Fury Of Firestorm #28



## FEW ACTORS HAVE HAD THEIR CREATIVE PROCESS AS INTENSELY EXAMINED AS JARED LETO. THE WIDELY REPORTED GIFTS OF ANAL BEADS AND USED CONDOMS ARE

a little... intense, but Leto tells us that there really was no other way to prepare to play a character like the Joker. "Yeah, what do you think?" he asks. "I don't use the term 'method' – it's kind of a polluted word. What I try to do is to focus and commit as much as possible so I can do the film, the story, the character and everybody else justice. That's it."

"I think that the Joker probably feeds off resentment, and the way that people are loving to laugh, the more uncomfortable [he gets]," he continues. "The more resentment, the more conflict, and the more enemies that he gets, the more fulfilled he feels."

If that was his goal, then he went about it the right way, starting with Robbie. The relationship between Harley and the Joker is one of DC's best loved; a lopsided love story that

has been played in varying degrees of light and dark. Harley loves her Mr J, and even though her Puddin' might not share those feelings to quite the same extent, he definitely feels... well, possessive is probably the right word. While Smith got a relatively formal box of bullets, Robbie was given more personal gifts, including a live rat. "I was... surprised," she tells us. "Yes, there's an understatement!" laughs Smith. "You shut that box so quickly!" exclaims Delevingne.

"We were in the rehearsal room, so everyone was [surprised]," Robbie remembers. "I screamed because I didn't realise it was alive! 'Guys, what do I do with it?' Everyone was like 'I don't know, I guess you have to kill it?' 'What?! No!'"

Although the gifts ranged from the almost cuddly (a pet snake) to the confrontational (those aforementioned anal beads), Robbie tells us that she never had a problem with Leto's special deliveries. "I loved that stuff. I mean, Jared was doing half of my work for me. Harley's very much part

SLICIDE SQUAD

### ARKHAM PATIENT FORMS

Patient number: 00017556389	
Patient name: Chato Santana	
Alias: El Diablo	Known associates: Lazarus Lane
Wanted for: Murder	
Abilities: Pyrokinesis	
Confiscated: Matches	
Notes: Santana is the third El Diablo, and he's the only one in this group who actually turned himself in. A former gang member, he used his abilities to conjure fire to burn down a building which he didn't realise contained women and children. He's now filled with remorse, but struggles to control his terrible power. Handle with care.	
First appearance: Suicide Squad Vol 4 #1	

Arkham Asylum Patient Photograph .....  
Illustration by Intake Officer David Gousens

“WITH DAVID AYER’S VISION, THIS IS GOING TO CHANGE THE BAR IN THE REALM OF SUPERHERO MOVIES”  
ADEWALE AKINNUOYE-AGBAJE



The Suicide Squad assemble – but who will be left standing?

### DESIGN A POSTER FOR

## Suicide Squad

Our sister magazine **Photoshop Creative**, in association with Warner Bros Pictures & ODEON, is giving you the chance to show off your creative skills in the ultimate fan artwork competition. Entries will be judged by director David Ayer, and the winner displayed in selected ODEON cinemas across the UK.

To find out how to enter and for full terms and conditions, visit <http://blog.photoshopcreative.co.uk/competitions/suicide-squad>

For further information, join [www.facebook.com/suicidesquaduk](http://www.facebook.com/suicidesquaduk).

Follow @SuicideSquadUK



# COVER FEATURE

Suicide Squad

of this relationship, and to have such commitment on the other half made my job a thousand times easier and a thousand times more fun. It keeps you on your toes, I don't know what's going to happen when we go on set, I have no idea what he's going to do. It's so exciting to act opposite that."

"It really brought [things] to life for us," adds Delevingne. "Going from us rehearsing from the page to going to such visceral things [that] you can feel and touch, in your face, like... holy shit! It's like interactive theatre."

Indeed, one gift from Leto is credited with forging the Squad itself. While Ayer got the actors working on bonding and developing their characters, Leto stayed separate. However, on one occasion he did make his presence felt, as Jay Hernandez remembers. "One of Joker's henchmen came into the rehearsal space, and when that happened it galvanised us; something happened," he tells us. "The Suicide Squad was born!" laughs Smith. "He just burst in. 'What the fuck? I know we've got security outside!'"

"He had a dead pig, and threw it down on the table and said, 'Here's a present from Mr J,'" Kinnaman picks up. "He had the slit throat with the tongue sticking out," interjects Delevingne. "And me and Jai looked at each other like, 'We've got to do something, man!'" laughs Kinnaman. "He'd already walked out so we ran down the corridor and dragged him back into the room. He was like 'Guys, it's over, it's over.' It's not over! We pulled him in and everybody jumped him. We tied him, took a picture, put the pig around his shoulders and put an apple in its mouth."

"That was [Leto's] gift, and it was really special and mind-blowing and fucking

awesome," concludes Hernandez. "When it happened, it's like everybody turned and we were instantly like, what are we doing? What the fuck are we doing?"

"We've gotta retaliate, we've got to do something," remembers Robbie. "It changed everything." "The final drop in the cauldron," adds Delevingne gleefully.

That cauldron pun aptly leads us to Delevingne's character, who remains the subject of much speculation. The trailers have given us a look at both June Moone and her magical alter ego, Enchantress, but while the former is seen getting close to Rick Flag, the latter has been kept separate from the Squad.

This had led to a lot of gossip about the possibility of her being the film's real villain (speculation fuelled by all those mysterious gooey monsters and huge portals in the trailers, about which the cast is saying nothing). While she's naturally cagey about plot points, she tells us that there's definitely a clear divide between her two characters.

"I felt like one was slightly more simple than the other," she remembers. "Mainly because I feel like I got a bit more information about one than the other. The first thing that David mentioned to me before I got the role was only about the Enchantress side. It was more about finding that part of myself, studying addiction and desperation and that void."

"One of the first things he said was 'Go to the forest, the country, hopefully under the full moon, naked, and feel what that feels like,'" she continues. "And I was like 'This is fucking awesome! Okay, I'm going to do that!' And I didn't even have the part yet. That character was a lot more freeing in a way."



Katana – Flag's right hand – is played by Karen Fukuhara.



Akwale Akinuoye-Agbaje's Killer Croc – less 'crocodile' and more 'psychotic cannibal murderer'.



Cara Delevingne is June Moone, the unfortunate possessed by the villainous Enchantress.

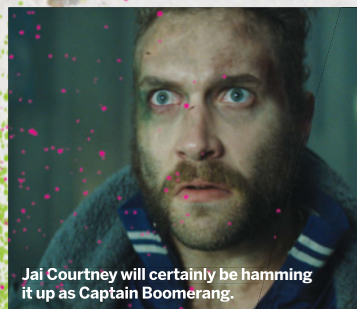
“WHEN DAVID OFFERED ME THE ROLE, HE TOLD ME TO GET INTO AS MUCH TROUBLE AS I COULD WITHOUT BEING ARRESTED”  
JAI COURTNEY

ANOTHER ACTOR WHO FELT THE FREEDOM OF AYER'S DIRECTION WAS COURTNEY, WHO LOOKS LIKE HE'S HAVING AN UNREASONABLE AMOUNT OF FUN. FOR

starters, he gets to use his own accent as Australian crook Digger Harkness, but he tells us that his director really encouraged him to get into character.

"It was a process. I stayed in character for five months as well, everyone's talking about Jared being method, but like... I fucking went hard," he deadpans as laughter echoes around the room. "Not a whole lot of credit coming my way!" In fairness, what he tells us next doesn't quite match up to Akinuoye-Agbaje's stories of listening to tapes of actual cannibal Issei Sagawa, but still.

"When David offered me the role, he told me to get into as much trouble as I could without being arrested," Courtney continues. "And then the next email I got from him was asking me all about houses on my street and how I would break in, and which one it would be, and what I would steal. It does launch you into that space. It was great to be given an excuse to embrace your inner shitbag. And it was awesome because I didn't feel guilty once



Jai Courtney will certainly be hamming it up as Captain Boomerang.

## ARKHAM PATIENT FORM

Patient number  
00014685325

Patient name:  
Waylon Jones

Alias  
Killer Croc

Known associates:  
Various

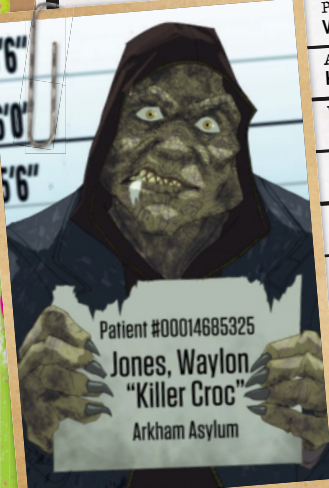
Wanted for:  
Murder, cannibalism

Abilities:  
Is basically a human crocodile

Confiscated:  
Packed lunch (contents unknown)

Notes:  
Waylon had a difficult childhood, suffering from a rare and untreatable condition that made him resemble a crocodile. Isolated and violent, he embarked on a life of crime, driving fear into his enemies by eating the flesh of his victims. Was he born a monster, or did he become one? Either way, keep your hands away from his mouth.

First appearance:  
Batman #357



..... Arkham Asylum Patient Photograph .....  
Illustration by Intake Officer David Cousens





# SUICIDE SQUAD

Bad Guys Do It Well

## ARKHAM PATIENT FORM

Patient number  
00047539861

Patient name:  
June Moone

Alias  
Enchantress

Known associates:  
Various

Wanted for:  
Murder, magical chaos, summoning demons

Abilities:  
Can open portals, summon demons and terrors

Confiscated:  
Sketch pad, pencils

### Notes:

This one is rather unfortunate. You see, June Moone is a young artist who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Enchantress is her alter ego, and she's somewhat less friendly. June is possessed by a spirit which turns into a very powerful and very angry witch. Generally, we try to keep June in the room as much as possible.

First appearance:

*Strange Adventures* #187 (1966)



Arkham Asylum Patient Photograph  
Illustration by Intake Officer David Gousens

about how unprofessional I got. Because it was all in the name of..." "Art!" interjects Robbie, as Courtney agrees with more laughter.

Although Courtney may not be taking himself too seriously, there's no doubt that he and his cast mates are excited about the end result. At the time of our interview, *Batman V Superman* had just endured a disappointing opening week at the box office and a lot of unkind reviews. If any of that translated to pressure on the *Suicide Squad* cast, however, you'd never know it. There's nothing but confidence in this room about how *Suicide Squad* is going to go down with the general public.

"The thing with this movie, it's the beauty of comic-book films in general, that there's a built-in audience and there's a built-in curiosity, so this is a part of an entire world that people have already seen seven, eight, ten movies within the world," Smith tells us. "So I don't think that getting people is going to be an issue. It's when they get there are they going to like what they see, and we all feel very confident that when you sit down you're going to really enjoy getting to meet the *Suicide Squad*."

"It feels rich," adds Kinnaman. "It's a wealth of characters. All the characters have contrasts, they all have their moments, they all feel very specific and very original. And it's fun and it has a depth to it. It just feels like it's a wealth of entertainment."

"I feel like every single one of us has a specific story to tell," adds Karen Fukuhara. "And as an audience member maybe you won't connect with every character, but you will have a connection with one."

"You don't have to connect with every character, just the Japanese ones!" teases Smith.

"So with *Wonder Woman* and *Justice League: Part One* still a way off on the horizon, could *Suicide Squad* finally be the DC movie to bring the fight to Marvel? Unsurprisingly, that's an opinion the group seems to agree with. "There's

something really exciting about it. To me it reminds me of what *The Bourne Identity* did to action films," Akinuoye-Agbaje tells us. "It changed the bar and, with David Ayer's vision I think this film is going to change the bar in the realm of superhero movies. He's bringing a different tone of realism to it that has been lacking, but you still have all the splendour and fantastic moments in it, but it's relatable. So I think it's going to change the bar in how these movies are shot and the appetite of the audience."

"So what you're saying is Marvel sucks?" laughs Adam Beach. "No! I love them!" exclaims Akinuoye-Agbaje. "What I'm saying is it's going to change the bar and they're going to have to catch up!" The Squad has spoken. ☞

*Suicide Squad* will be released in cinemas on 5 August.

## FUTURE PLEDGES

Who could be next up to join Task Force X?

### DEATHSTROKE

Slade Wilson was heavily rumoured for this movie, so the merc can't be too far away. There'd be some excellent competition with Deadshot.

### MINDBOGGLER

Notorious as being the character Captain Boomerang simply let die, Leah Wasserman's abilities to conjure illusions would make her pretty handy.

### PARASITE

Rudy Jones can absorb the powers and knowledge of anyone he touches, which would make him tough to hang out with, but very dangerous.

### BLACK ADAM

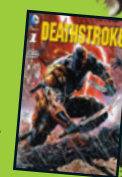
Given that *The Rock*'s film version is still ages away, why not introduce this badass in the next Squad film? You know it makes sense.

### KILLER FROST

One of DC's most awesome villainesses, Killer Frost needs to make the jump to the big screen. Every team needs someone who can conjure ice!

### POISON IVY

We all want to see Harley Quinn and Poison Ivy on screen together. Come on, this is a no-brainer. Actually, scrap that. Harley/Ivy team-up. Done.







## COVER FEATURE

Suicide Squad

# THE CLOWN

WORDS  
JONATHAN  
HATFULL

## EVERYTHING YOU HAVE TO KNOW ABOUT THE GREATEST COMIC-BOOK VILLAIN OF ALL TIME

### BATMAN #1

**WRITER:** Bill Finger  
**PENCILLER:** Bob Kane  
**INKER/LETTER:** Jerry Robinson



The Joker made his first appearance in the first issue of Batman's comic run, 'The Legend Of The Batman - Who He Is, And How He Came To Be'. So much classic Joker is already in place, from his ability to leave a smile on victims' faces to his willingness to kill. His face isn't frozen in that grin; he grows into his Conrad Veidt-esque look.



1940

### THE KILLING JOKE

**WRITER:** Alan Moore **ARTIST:** Brian Bolland  
**COLOURIST:** John Higgins  
**LETTERER:** Richard Starkings



Alan Moore has been very vocal about not liking his acclaimed one-shot, and the treatment of Barbara Gordon is pretty rancid, but there's some truly brilliant stuff in *The Killing Joke*. It's a brutal gut-punch that offers a potential past for The Joker that's ultimately as tragic as Batman's - if it's true. It's problematic, but there's a reason why so many readers treat it as a sacred text, and the ending is superb.



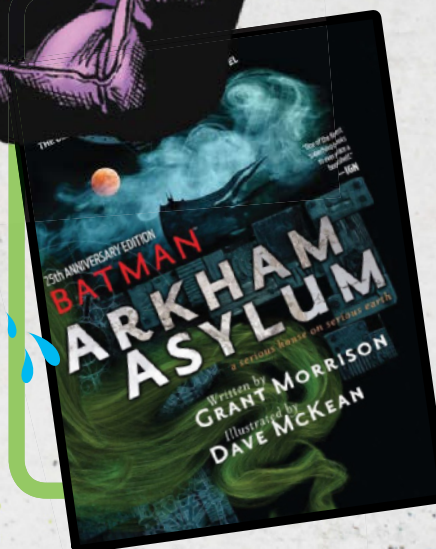
### ARKHAM ASYLUM: A SERIOUS HOUSE ON SERIOUS EARTH

**WRITER:** Grant Morrison  
**ARTIST:** Dave McKean  
**LETTERER:** Gaspar Saladino

While the Joker is just one of the inmates who have taken over the asylum in Morrison and McKean's brilliant graphic novel, it's a fantastic vision of the character as he pushes and pulls at the Dark Knight's weaknesses. He's playful and murderous, but has a strange understanding of his counterpart. He's still absolutely terrifying though, with one hell of an April Fool.

1989

WHO IS YOUR  
FAVOURITE  
JOKER?





# PRINCE OF CRIME

## THE JOKER COMICS YOU NEED TO READ

### THE JOKER'S FIVE-WAY REVENGE!

**BATMAN #251**  
**WRITER:** Dennis O'Neil **PENCILLER:** Neal Adams  
**INKER/LETTER:** Dick Giordano  
**COLOURIST:** Tom Ziuko

This excellent story from Dennis O'Neil breathed new life into the Joker and brought back some grit. The story has its fair share of daft details (a shark!), but it makes the Joker a stone-cold killer too.



### THE LAUGHING FISH/ THE SIGN OF THE JOKER

**DETECTIVE COMICS #475-476**  
**WRITER:** Steve Engleheart **ARTIST:** Marshall Rogers  
**INKER:** Terry Austin **COLOURIST:** Glynis Oliver  
**LETTERER:** Milton Snappin

Following on from O'Neill's lead, Engleheart delivered a Joker who was terrifying. His plan may be as daft as they come (mutated fish that look like him), but his methods are brutal and shocking: intimidation, violence and unpredictability. In one scene, he pushes a henchman into oncoming traffic.



1973

### A DEATH IN THE FAMILY

**BATMAN #426-429**  
**WRITER:** Jim Starlin **ARTIST:** Jim Aparo  
**INKER:** Mike DeCarlo **COLOURIST:** Adrienne Roy  
**LETTERER:** John Costanza

The wider storyline isn't one of the best-remembered *Batman* comics, but everyone knows its punchline. The rest of the story is ridiculous and full of terrorists, but there's only one person who could kill Robin: The Joker. The villain beating the Boy Wonder to death with a crowbar is still one of comics' most shocking moments.



### HUNT THE DARK KNIGHT

**THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS #3**  
**WRITER:** Frank Miller  
**PENCILLER:** Frank Miller  
**INKER:** Klaus Janson  
**COLOURIST:** Lynn Varley  
**LETTERER:** John Costanza

In the third issue of *The Dark Knight Returns*, the apparently reformed Joker commits mass murder at the first opportunity. As Batman chases him down, he breaks his arch-enemy's neck, leaving him paralysed. In a wonderful final act of cruelty, the Joker kills himself, knowing that everyone will think the Bat did it. Miller's Joker is sexualised, cold and calculating, but still possesses a sense of showmanship.

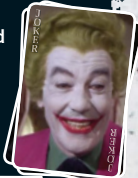


1978

### THE JOKER ON SCREEN

**CESAR ROMERO (BATMAN TV SERIES, BATMAN: THE MOVIE)**

A still-obviously moustachioed prankster, Romero captured the character at his most capering, while still prone to temper tantrums and alliteration.



**JACK NICHOLSON (BATMAN)**

There's a lot of Jaaaack in this Joker, but that's no bad thing. Nicholson chews the scenery, flipping from giddy to furious at a moment's notice.



1988

### MAD LOVE

**WRITERS:** Paul Dini, Bruce Timm  
**PENCILLERS:** Bruce Timm, Glen Murakami  
**INKER:** Bruce Timm  
**COLOURISTS:** Bruce Timm, Rick Taylor  
**LETTERER:** Tim Harkins

The creative team behind *Arkham Asylum* gave Harley Quinn room to play in this fantastic one-shot comic (complete with the cartoon's brilliant visual style), which showed how Dr Harleen Quinzel lost her mind and just how far she'd go for Mr J. It's really all about Harley, but Joker's outraged reaction to hearing that his girlfriend might actually be the one to kill Batman is perfect.



1986

### SOFT TARGETS

**GOTHAM CENTRAL #12-15**  
**WRITERS:** Ed Brubaker, Greg Rucka  
**PENCILLER:** Michael Lark  
**INKERS:** Michael Lark, Stefano Gaudiano  
**COLOURIST:** Lee Loughridge  
**LETTERER:** Clem Robbins

This four-issue arc in Brubaker and Rucka's *Gotham Central* series showed that the Joker feels like a strong precursor to Nolan's take. It's Christmas, which means maximum chaos when the villain picks up a sniper rifle and starts shooting. Oh, and he's running a countdown, too. The moment he turns himself in is pure Kevin Spacey in *Se7en*.



**HEATH LEDGER (THE DARK KNIGHT)**

A dark portrayal for a Dark Knight, Ledger's Oscar-winning turn was unpredictable and genuinely terrifying without losing his sense of humour.



**MARK HAMILL (BATMAN: THE ANIMATED SERIES, ARKHAM GAMES, ETC)**

Hamill's Joker is the definitive voice performance for the character. Throughout the animated series and the games, his gleeful, mocking Joker is a joy.



1994

2003



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STAR TREK BEYOND  
The Final Frontier And Beyond

WORDS EDWARD GROSS

# THE FINAL FRONTIER AND BEYOND

STAR TREK BEYOND SEES THE USS ENTERPRISE FINALLY FOLLOW ITS MISSION TO **EXPLORE STRANGE NEW WORLDS WITH INCOMING DIRECTOR JUSTIN LIN** – ONLY TO ENCOUNTER THEIR MOST TERRIFYING ADVERSARY YET. **CHRIS PINE, ZACHARY QUINTO AND CO** TELL US WHETHER THE SAGA HAS FINALLY REACHED THE FINAL FRONTIER...





# BIG MOVIE

Star Trek Beyond



Fast & Furious director Justin Lin was brought on board to take over from JJ Abrams.



**T**HERE IS A MOMENT IN THE STAR TREK BEYOND TRAILER WHEN IDRIS ELBA'S NEW VILLAIN, KRALL, PROCLAIMS THAT THE TIME HAS COME FOR THE FRONTIER

to push back – which may be a pretty apt description of both the film's storyline and production of the third entry in the JJ Abrams-produced series.

But part three has had its share of potential setbacks. For starters, Abrams, who directed the first two instalments, stepped away from the director's chair so that he could take on *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. The initial plan called for Roberto Orci – producer and co-writer of the previous two films – to take on directorial and co-writer duties, but even while sets were being built, something changed. Orci was out, Simon Pegg (also reprising his role as Scotty) was brought on to co-write the new screenplay with Doug Jung, with Justin Lin of *Fast & Furious* fame being hired as director.

Naturally, rumblings began that this would merely be that series transposed to space, a sentiment not helped when Paramount execs were quoted as saying they were hoping for something like

*Guardians Of The Galaxy*. Then came the first trailer, which conveyed exactly that, and was universally derided as being decidedly *not Star Trek*. That feeling began to fade with the release of a second trailer, which seemingly embraced more of the tenets of the show.

"Look," offers John Cho, who is back playing Hikaru Sulu, "a film is really made in the editing room, so you never know until it's finished, but I will say that the second trailer felt more like the film that I read. And when I read the script, it felt very much like the original series to me. That second trailer conveys that sense of feeling like the original series. It's so thrilling. *That* was a good trailer."

At the start of what would be a mad dash to the finish line, Pegg says that he and Jung began with one basic idea: "It was apparent to us that the crew would be out on the mission that made the show popular in the first place – a deep-space mission for five years. The first two films were spent with us really getting to know each other, and in the case of the last film, having an adventure that stayed within our solar system. Doug and I felt, 'Let's get them out there now and get onto that



# STAR TREK BEYOND

The Final Frontier And Beyond



wagon train in space and start boldly going where no man has gone before.”

It was a plan that worked for Chris Pine, portraying Captain James T Kirk, who's ready for the next stage in the character's evolution. “What you see in this film is a close-up look at this crew. I've always thought about a crew in a submarine or something. It's like you go out for six months at a time, and it's not like every day is dealing with potential nuclear disasters. It's like you're out there swimming a bit and sailing, and nothing's happening. So it looks at what it's like to be with the same crew of people for five years. What is the boredom of that kind of monotony; of having to find meaning and vision when you have to grab a 14th cup of coffee to stay awake to get through the night?”

Karl Urban, back as Leonard ‘Bones’ McCoy, finds it interesting that they come face-to-face with that reality of actually being in a confined environment with each other. “There's a lot of fun, fertile,

funny material to explore in that,” he laughs. “This movie really explores what is beyond what we've set up. It questions why we are doing what we're doing. What is the validity of it? What is the meaning of it? Through this movie we disperse and go on these amazing individual journeys of growth, and then come back together. It's a lot of fun to watch.”

**T**HOSE INDIVIDUAL JOURNEYS ARE THE RESULT OF THE ENTERPRISE COMING UNDER ATTACK FROM KRALL'S FORCES. WHILE MUCH OF THE PLOT REMAINS

ambiguous, the alien obviously has issues with the Federation, and has – based on the trailer – caused the destruction of the vessel, resulting in the stranding of the crew on an unknown planet's surface along with various other races, including Sofia Boutella's (*Kingsman*) Jaylah. What this results in is seeing different pairings than we're used to: Bones and Spock, Kirk and Chekov (Anton Yelchin), and Sulu with Uhura (Zoe Saldana).

“We felt like the Kirk/Spock dynamic was explored quite a lot in the first two movies,” says Pegg. “And myself and Doug always loved the dynamic between Bones and Spock, because they are opposites. They're like the devil and the angel on Kirk's shoulders.”

Concurs Pine, “The first films were very much Spock and Kirk-centric, which of course I love, because I got to ➤➤

**WE ALWAYS LOVED THE DYNAMIC BETWEEN BONES AND SPOCK... THEY'RE LIKE THE DEVIL AND THE ANGEL ON KIRK'S SHOULDERS**  
SIMON PEGG

## THE CAPTAIN

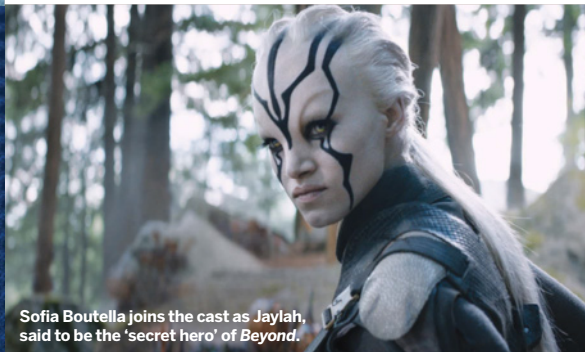
Chris Pine on Kirk



“There are a lot of big questions for Kirk in this. He's not a young man, at least as defined by the first film, dealing with rage issues, or having to

prove himself. He's been there, done that. Now he is the captain, and he's looking around thinking, ‘What next?’ You got the award and people have told you you're good enough, and you're thinking, ‘Well I thought that it was going to be *this* thing, and it's actually not.’ So it's redefining boundaries and parameters and desires and interest and focus in terms of what is meaningful to him.

“This is a different film for Kirk. The first two were really dealing with the shadow of his father. He was born on the day his father died. That cast a looming amount of pressure on him to live up to someone he didn't really know. The pressure was almost unbearable, I think. In this one he's turned a corner and he's realising now as a man who's dealt with those issues, who is he as his own man? What is it like to be the captain of a starship and to captain these people without burdening himself with that legacy? In that new space, there's a lot of freedom there, thinking about what he really wants to do and what will really make him happy. Then the drama ensues and stuff happens, but that I think is where you find Kirk at the beginning of this movie.”



Sofia Boutella joins the cast as Jaylah, said to be the ‘secret hero’ of *Beyond*.



Pegg took on writing duties despite having famously said, “every odd-numbered *Star Trek* movie is shit,” on *Spaced*.





## BIG MOVIE

Star Trek Beyond

“WE SORT OF OPERATED AS A WHEEL IN THE PREVIOUS TWO FILMS, WHICH IS TO SAY CAPTAIN KIRK WAS AT THE CENTRE OF THE WHEEL”

JOHN CHO

### THE PILOT

John Cho on Sulu



“To me, there has definitely been an evolution in Sulu. In the first film, it was like an evolution from the TV series where you got to learn a lot about

him while you saw him be much more active than he was on the show. And then you saw his leadership abilities take a leap in *Star Trek Into Darkness* when he took command briefly. And in *Star Trek Beyond*, you see him as a family man with personal stakes in this battles that involves the universe. So there's definitely an arc there.”

*Star Trek Beyond* will see Uhura team up with Sulu, exploring new relationship dynamics.





## TO BOLDLY KEEP GOING

What we want to see from future *Trek* adventures

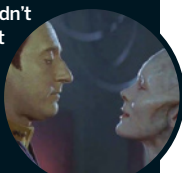
### MORE OLD-SCHOOL LOCATIONS

Massive space battles are all well and good, but we'd love to see Kirk and the team arrive in some stranger settings where civilisations have somehow mimicked the old west. It would be great!



### THE BORG

We know that they didn't appear until *TNG*, but we would like to see the Borg on the big screen again. They're one of the franchise's greatest villains, and it would be brilliant to see this *Trek* crew take on such a formidable threat. But who would be assimilated?



### THE NEXT GEN CREW

Hear us out – we don't want a handover or anything. But it would be really interesting to see some kind of teaser for these characters who would become so iconic. Maybe a brief appearance from a young Jean-Luc Picard? We reckon he'd get on with Spock. Nothing too Wesley-ish, though.



### KLINGONS

They did pop up in *Into Darkness* before getting smacked about by Benedict Cumberbatch, but how long are they going to make us wait for a proper Klingon story? They're such an iconic part of the *Trek* universe, we just can't fathom it.



### KIRK RIDING A HORSE

Look, we all love motorbikes. We get why you'd want your young James T Kirk to ride a motorbike. But we're just going to throw this out there: put him on a horse. This is the wagon train in space, and Kirk is our western hero. Put him on a horse, just once. Please.



work with Zach [Quinto], but in *Star Trek Beyond* it seems like there's a dispersal of the prime elements of *Star Trek*, so everybody has space and time to explore their characters and the relationships between the characters."

"Zach and I had a lot of fun together," notes Urban. "You get the polarity of these two characters that are quite often chalk and cheese, and you throw them into the deep end, because it's just so much fun to watch these characters get together to try to figure it out. And there is such a deep respect between them. They may philosophically and ideologically and emotionally be polar opposites, but when the chips are down, they come together to overcome a common adversity. That's one of the strengths of *Star Trek*, and always has been."

Expanding on this, Zachary Quinto says, "These are two characters who are historically pretty diametrically opposed, so there's also a lot of humour that comes from that and a lot of depth. They really do finish this film with a deeper appreciation of each other. They were always friends in a way, but they approach things from very different points of view and express things very differently."

"But I think the relationship benefitted from the lack of buffer in the form of Kirk," he adds, "and ultimately they really need each other in order to survive. The whole movie is about all of us finding our way back to each other

and understanding the power of when we unify. For these two characters, and for audiences who know them and love them, it's going to be really exciting."

**THESE FILMS, CHO STATES, ARE DIFFERENT FROM THOSE FEATURING THE ORIGINAL SERIES ACTORS IN THAT THE FEELING IS MUCH MORE OF AN ENSEMBLE**

adventure: "I love the older movies, but I think maybe the ethos is a little different, and they certainly seem to, from my vantage point, work hard at giving everybody a moment and incorporating everyone. It certainly makes for more difficult and intricate storytelling, but that, to me, is the achievement of all three films. I'm always amazed at how many threads they keep going. For Sulu and Uhura in this, it's an interesting relationship. Obviously, we're in the midst of doing stuff together, but there's a little mining of the relationship between the two. We sort of operated as a wheel in the previous two films, which is to say Captain Kirk was at the centre of the wheel and we were all spokes leading to him. It's interesting to mix it up."

Putting the characters in perilous situations felt like a genuine gift to Pegg, because in the end the collective experience in *Star Trek Beyond* will bring the crew closer together than they've ever been. "They've known each other longer, they've been through a lot together, so the stakes are higher because their feelings are deeper," he muses.

## THE PHILOSOPHER

### ZACHARY QUINTO ON SPOCK



"Spock is trying to figure out his path. As everybody remembers from the first film of our reboot, Vulcan was destroyed,

and I think he's really torn between his allegiance to rebuilding his race and his allegiance to the Federation and Starfleet. I think Kirk and Spock rely on each other a lot for guidance through those tough moments. But they don't really necessarily have that in this film, so they both I think arrive at an understanding of who they are as individuals in an interesting way because they're not together."

"It's great to take a group of 50-year-old characters like that and give them a new context and new adventure."

Part of this new adventure, of course, was the addition of Lin as director, who was obviously going to bring something very different to the table. "What was daunting about this film," says Pine, "is that there was a new creative crew behind it. New writers and producers, and Justin Lin and Justin's creative team. We started in early 2015 and didn't have much time. But Justin has done an incredible job of pulling this together. Obviously from *Fast* ➤



Idris Elba joins the cast as antagonist Krall, who has an axe to grind with the Federation.





# BIG MOVIE

Star Trek Beyond

➤ & *Furious* he brings a sense of action and that kind of kinetic shape of film.”

“People forget this, but Justin Lin’s debut [*Better Luck Tomorrow*] was a fantastic little Sundance movie,” emphasises Pegg. “Studios will often find a gifted director who’s done something kind of cool and small, and throw them into the fiery franchise arena. That’s what happened with Justin with *Fast & Furious*, and what Justin did with those movies is clearly something that worked, because that franchise has become a behemoth. With *Star Trek*, Justin is able to exercise all of his talent. Not just in terms of having to stage and execute action, but also how he can bring characters to life.”

“It was wonderful having a fresh injection of energy,” Urban elaborates, “and of course the way that Justin approaches this material is obviously different from the way that JJ does. Justin being a long-term fan of *Trek*, he is very vigilant that he imbues his movie with, I guess, a real sense and spirit that is akin to what Roddenberry created in the Sixties.”

Pine’s feeling is that Lin is direct and explicit in what he wants, and that the man works pretty much non-stop. He reflects that they’d spend the day shooting; then Lin would head home, edit, sleep three hours and come back the next day knowing *exactly* what needed to be done.

“I’d say this film, more than anything, is three quarters non-stop action, while maintaining a really good character core,” Pine reflects. “And that’s what Simon brings to it, too. He knows us and what we do well. He knows how to write to our strengths. The thing that I’ve always wanted, and my favourite thing to do, is the comedy. I was probably most nervous about retaining that kind of core, which is what JJ brought to the first one. It was fun, and a tone that was not Marvel superhero-aware and not *Batman* super-dark. It’s Eighties pop with a commercial sensibility – that is it’s serious and can deal with great themes, but also really fun and a great way to spend two hours.”

**E**XECUTIVE PRODUCER DAVID ELLISON POINTS OUT THAT ONE OF THE THINGS THAT WAS IMPORTANT TO EVERYONE INVOLVED, INCLUDING ABRAMS, WAS FOR someone to come in and put their own stamp on the movies. “And obviously,” he says, “in this film, to truly do what *Star Trek* promises, which is go where no one has gone before. *That* was a challenge, and Justin had a vision for exactly how he wanted to do that. The result is a film that I believe is worthy of the 50th anniversary of *Star Trek*.”

His last point is no small detail on anyone’s mind: this year marks the half-century mark for the original *Star Trek*, which debuted on 8 September 1966. That alone is what drove pretty



Pine’s initial worries about the new creative team were put to rest.

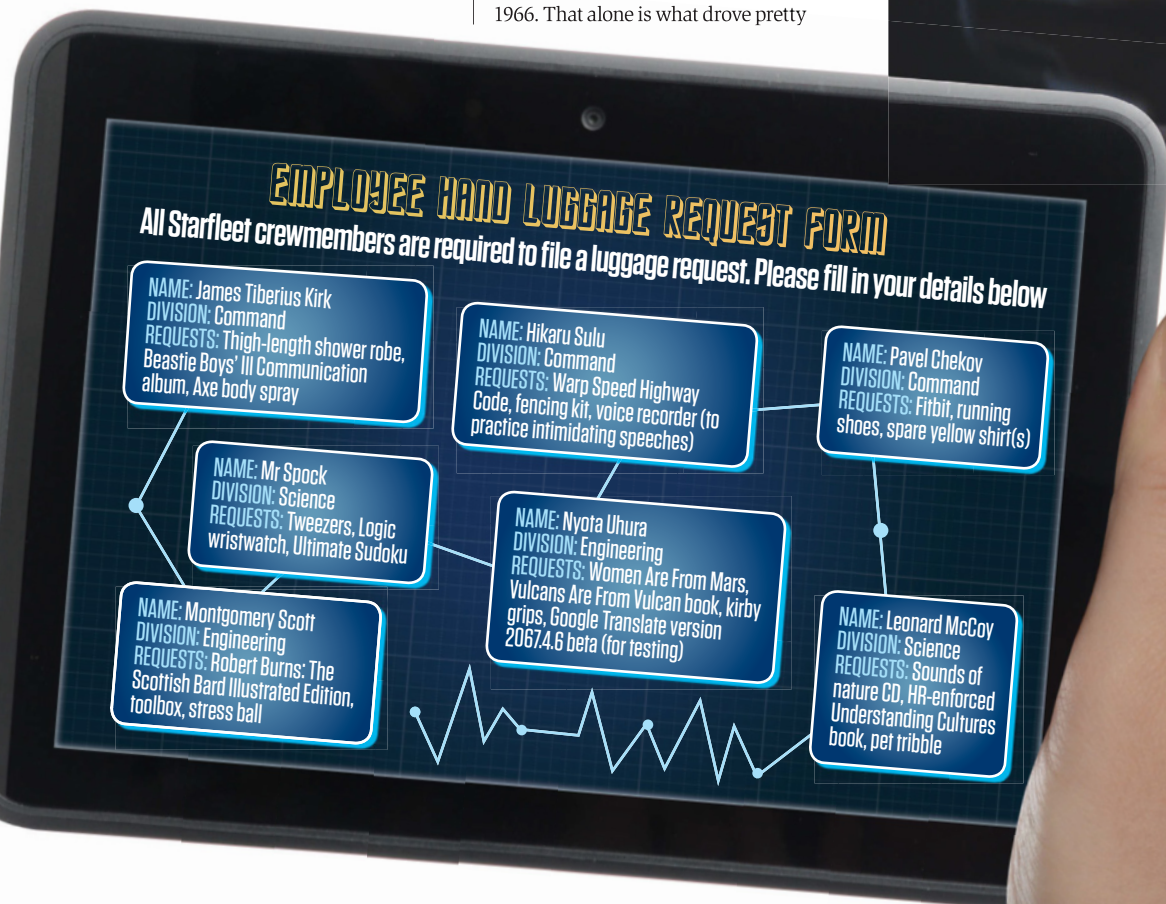


Bones and Spock are described as “the angel and devil on Kirk’s shoulders”.



The new film will see the crew tested to the max.

“WE WERE SO LUCKY TO BE ABLE TO WORK WITH JUSTIN LIN ON THIS MOVIE”  
JJ ABRAMS







With the crew stranded on a planet, they also appear to be separated from each other.

## THE DOCTOR

### Karl Urban on Bones



"The first film for me was quite terrifying, because I've been a long-term fan of *Star Trek* and watched it growing up as a kid. When JJ cast me in the movie, I felt that if I wasn't in the movie and was going to the cinema, I would want to see some recognisable semblance of the character that I grew up loving. In some way, for all of us, that was the challenge: to identify what the very essence of those characters were and done so brilliantly well by the original actors. We had to define what that essence was and distil it into the younger version of that character and make it our own. There were some days when it was rather nerve-wracking, but we were all blessed by the fact that we had such a wonderful helmsman in the form of JJ Abrams."

much everyone in the making of *Star Trek Beyond*.

"It was so important to us that it be out in time for the 50th anniversary," Pegg observes. "Even more since Leonard Nimoy passed away. We wanted to tie all of that in together. I don't mean having Leonard in the movie, but just acknowledging *Star Trek*'s legacy and Leonard's legacy and everyone that's been involved with it from the beginning. It feels right that it be the anniversary year. *Star Trek Beyond* really celebrates everything that made this story great. All of us have really put our heart and soul into it.

"But let's face it," he continues, "the *Star Trek* of 2016 has to be different. We can't make those kind of small, thoughtful little plays like the episodes used to be. In terms of a cinematic sense, the studios just wouldn't bankroll it, and it's not what the larger audiences who

have now gone to see *Star Trek* – and who have as much right to it as the fans – want. We have to make something that people are going to come and see so we can keep making it. It doesn't mean we can't keep what made the show special and try and invigorate what *Star Trek* in 2016 means with what *Star Trek* in 1966 meant as well."

**F**OR ABRAMS' PART, THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY IS AN IMPORTANT MILESTONE. "I HOPE THAT JUSTIN'S PICTURE CELEBRATES THE SPIRIT, TONE and characters so beautifully brought to life by Roddenberry," he says. "I think *Star Trek Beyond* is addressing some elements that our first two films did not, including, of course, going on the five-year mission. Justin was a *Star Trek* fan from the very, very beginning. He loved and knew this world so much, and was really inspiring to talk to. I just felt that

this was someone, unlike myself, who loved it from the beginning. Though I fell in love with it later, I feel we were so lucky, all of us, to be able to work with Justin on this movie."

Pine drives home the point that Lin wanted to explore why *Trek* needs to be around and why it's so important. "It's revisiting a big essential theme of what this is all about, and it's exactly what made *Star Trek* so special in the Sixties," he explains. "It's really the relationship between selflessness and selfishness. It's, are you going to serve yourself, or are you going to serve the greater good? It seems like the story that we keep on retelling each other, the thing that resonates the most, is what Spock always says: The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few. Or the one." ☞

*Star Trek Beyond* will be released in cinemas on 22 July.



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## STAR TREK BEYOND

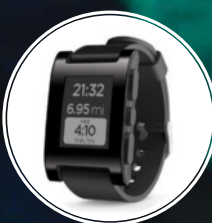
*Star Trek Beyond*, the highly anticipated next instalment in the globally popular *Star Trek* franchise, created by Gene Roddenberry and reintroduced by JJ Abrams in 2009, returns with director Justin Lin (the *Fast & Furious* franchise) at the helm of this epic voyage of the USS Enterprise and her intrepid crew. In *Beyond*, the Enterprise crew explores the furthest reaches of uncharted space, where they encounter a mysterious new enemy who puts them and everything the Federation stands for to the test.

The crew of the USS Enterprise are back exploring the final frontier in *Star Trek Beyond*, and to celebrate we're boldly giving away this amazing futuristic tech bundle! First, you'll get your hands on an awesome customisable smartwatch with Bluetooth connectivity, so you'll never be out of contact with your crew should you need beaming up! Then, blast out your favourite tunes with an iPod Shuffle and a futuristic Bluetooth speaker that wouldn't be out of place on the bridge of the Enterprise! Just in case a little more discretion is required, we'll also throw in a pair of top-of-the-range over-ear headphones! The ultimate futuristic tech prize, with *Star Trek Beyond*!

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**Who is directing  
Star Trek Beyond?**

- A) JJ Abrams
- B) Justin Lin
- C) Simon Pegg



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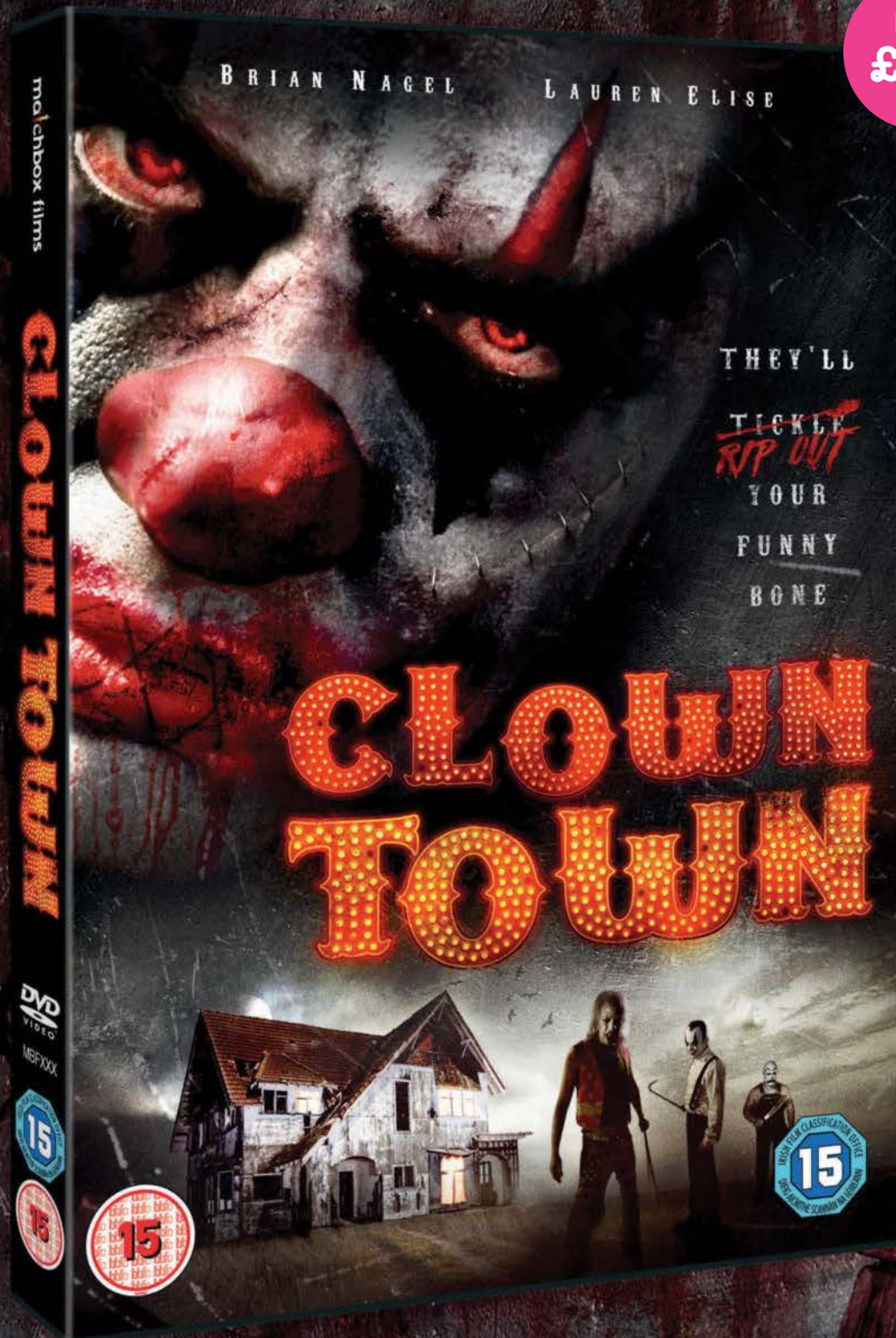
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# 10 MUST-SEE EPISODES OF STAR TREK THE ORIGINAL SERIES

FINALLY, THE FILMS ARE EMBRACING THEIR ORIGINAL SERIES ORIGINS WITH STAR TREK BEYOND. ALONG WITH THE TALENT INVOLVED, WE LOOK BACK AT THE INSTALMENTS THAT ALLOWED THE SAGA TO LIVE LONG AND PROSPER... WORDS EDWARD GROSS

**W**HAT BETTER WAY TO CELEBRATE THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF STAR TREK THAN TO LOOK BACK AT THE ORIGINAL SERIES ITSELF? WHAT follows is a behind-the-scenes guide to ten great episodes of the 1966-69 show. *Not*, it should be emphasised, the ten *greatest* episodes; just ten that work extremely well, so some of the choices may be deemed a bit off from the usual suspects...

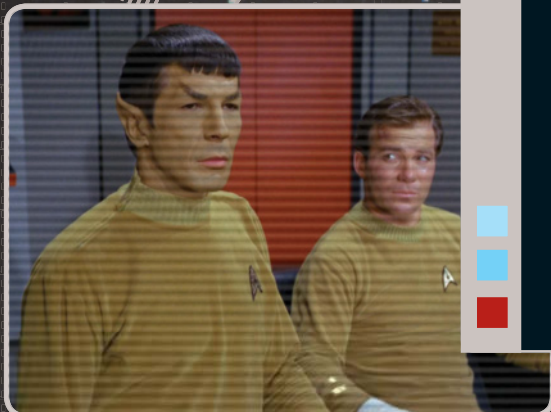
SEASON 1 EPISODE 3

## 'Where No Man Has Gone Before'

The second *Star Trek* pilot and the one that sold the series. Almost as important? It brought William Shatner's Captain Kirk together with Leonard Nimoy's Spock, who had worked with Jeffrey Hunter as Captain Pike in the first pilot, 'The Cage'.

"Bill Shatner's broader acting style created a new chemistry between the captain and Spock, and now it was quite different from the first pilot," remembered Nimoy in an earlier interview. "The Bill Shatner Kirk performance was the energetic, driving performance, and Spock could kind of slipstream along and make comments, give advice and give another point of view."

"If you look at Spock with his mum or dad, it's very ponderous," observes writer David Gerrold. "But Spock working with Kirk has the magic and it plays very well."





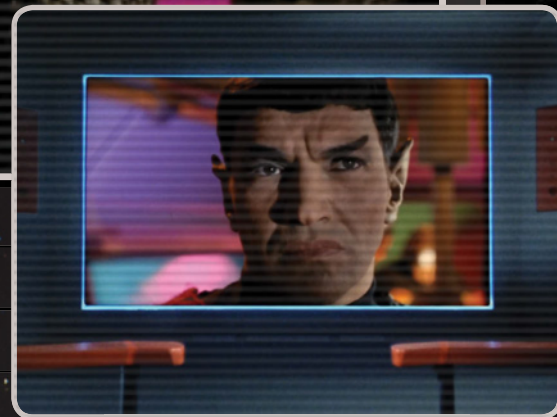
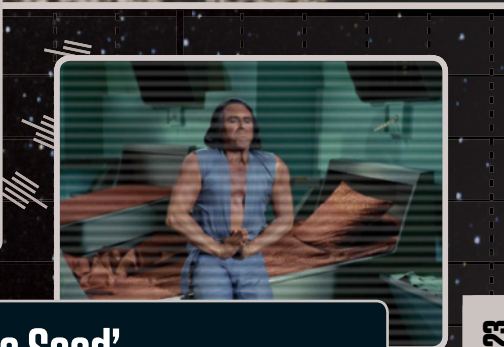


SEASON 1 EPISODE 14

## 'Balance Of Terror'

A taut thriller with the Enterprise and a Romulan warbird playing a galactic game of cat-and-mouse in what is essentially a World War II submarine story. It also serves as an introduction to the Romulans. "It was a matter of developing a good Romanesque set of admirable antagonists that were worthy of Kirk," explained writer Paul Schneider. "I came up with the concept of the Romulans, which was an extension of the Roman civilisation to the point of space travel."

"They were very heroic characters pitted one against the other, and it dealt with the length to which people would go for their honour," elaborates director Vincent McEveety.



SEASON 1 EPISODE 22

## 'Space Seed'

The world's first introduction to 20th century genetic superman Khan Noonien Singh as portrayed by actor Ricardo Montalban. "Khan was a character that was bigger than life," the actor reflects. "He had to be played that way. He was extremely powerful both mentally and physically, with an enormous amount of pride. But he was not totally villainous. He had some good qualities. I saw a nobility in the man that, unfortunately, was overridden by ambition and a thirst for power."

Amusingly, this episode's roots came from Fifties kids sci-fi show *Captain Video*. "We did some very far-out things on that show, including the popular idea of people being transported in space while in suspended animation," remembered writer Carey Wilber. "So I had this idea that I revived from *Captain Video*, because I thought it was time to do it again. It was a crazy story where we did the legend of men being turned into beasts, and our villainess had been transported from the days of Greek mythology to the future. So in doing 'Space Seed,' we took away the mythological powers and replaced them with a genetically altered human being."



SEASON 1 EPISODE 23

## 'A Taste Of Armageddon'

Kirk and Spock intervene in a conflict between two planets that have been fighting a computer war for centuries, with victims targeted by the machines willingly walking into disintegration chambers so that there are victors without the destruction of their societies. Kirk finds the system untenable, and takes matters into his own hands. "[Producer] Gene L. Coon did a rewrite on that," recalls story editor Dorothy Fontana. "I think some of the things he added really had a lot to do with the character of Kirk. It was Gene who wrote the speech at the end that man has a reputation as a killer, but you get up every morning and say, 'I'm not going to kill today.' It was one of those things that began to identify Kirk far more solidly than we had before."







# BIG MOVIE

Star Trek

## DAMN IT JIM!

...and 3 that weren't so great

### 'SPOCK'S BRAIN'

This one is usually derided as the worst episode of the series, and for good reason. As the title suggests, Spock's brain is stolen and it's up to Kirk, McCoy... and Spock's brainless body to retrieve it. "I don't think there's any way you can take that episode seriously," observes writer David Gerrold. "You've got to take it as a joke."



SEASON 3\_EPISODE 1

### 'THE WAY TO EDEN'

Space hippies attempt to seize the Enterprise so that they can be taken to a mythical world called Eden, a paradise that turns out to be anything but. Originally, it was titled 'Joanna', and dealt with McCoy's daughter. "The producers didn't care for that," says writer Dorothy Fontana, "so they made it Chekov's girlfriend. And then they shifted the focus of the story."



SEASON 3\_EPISODE 20

### 'TURNABOUT INTRUDER'

The final episode is a completely sexist exercise in which Kirk finds himself bodyswapped with Dr Janice Lester. Frieberger didn't disagree: "Frankly, I was a little concerned when Gene Roddenberry came up with the story. I had said to Gene, 'I wonder what Shatner is going to say about this?'" Gene said he wouldn't have any problem with it. He was right."



SEASON 3\_EPISODE 24



SEASON 1\_EPISODE 25

## 'The Devil In The Dark'

The crew go to a mining planet where a creature is killing the workers. This being turns out to be a mother protecting her eggs, which are being destroyed by the miners. "[It] really gets to the heart of what *Star Trek* was," observes Gerrold. "You had this menace, but once you understand what the creature is and why it's doing what it's doing, it's not really a menace at all. We end up learning more about appropriate behaviour out of learning to be compassionate, tolerant and understanding."

SEASON 2\_EPISODE 4

## 'Mirror, Mirror'

Kirk, McCoy, Scotty and Uhura find themselves on a parallel universe version of the Enterprise, where moving up in rank is achieved through assassination. While they attempt to figure out a way home, Kirk also tries to change the thinking of that universe's Mr Spock. The mirror universe would return in spin-off series *Deep Space Nine* and *Enterprise*.

"I wanted to do a parallel universe story," said writer Jerome Bixby. "I had already done a fiction story called 'One Way Street', and I thought that would make a good *Star Trek* [episode]. The universe I created was a very savage counterpart, virtually a pirate ship into which I could transpose a landing party."

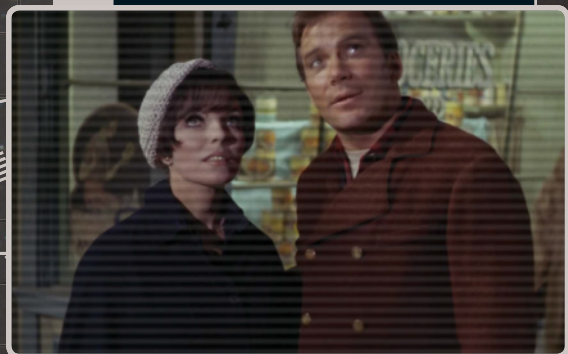


SEASON 1\_EPISODE 28

## 'The City On The Edge Of Forever'

Generally considered to be one of the best *Star Trek* episodes ever, this has Kirk and Spock pursuing a medically deranged McCoy to Thirties New York to prevent him from changing all of history. While there, Kirk falls in love with a woman named Edith Keeler, who history says must die. Kirk finds he can't bring himself to prevent her death.

In Harlan Ellison's original script, he is only prevented from doing so by Spock holding him back. "I made the point that there are some loves that are so great that you would sacrifice your ship, your crew, your friends, you mother, all of time and everything in defence of this great love," Ellison exclaims. "The TV ending, where he closes his eyes and lets her get hit by the truck, is absolutely bullshit. It destroyed the core of what I tried to do. It destroyed the extra human tragedy of it."







### SEASON 2, EPISODE 15

## 'The Trouble With Tribbles'

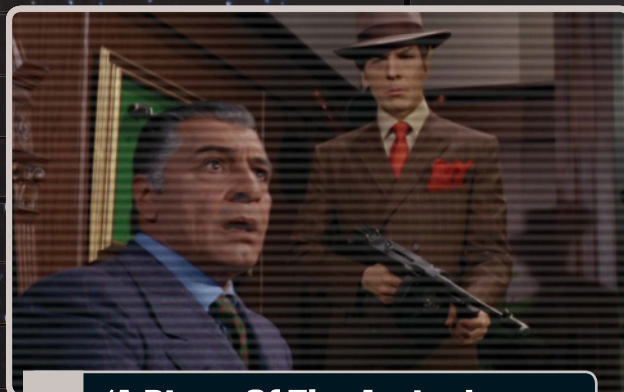
This is the episode that introduces the rapidly multiplying furballs in what turned out to be the show's first comedy.

"When I wrote the script, I looked at it as an honour and responsibility," recalls Gerrold, who made his debut as a writer. "I set out to write the very best *Star Trek* episode ever made."

Director Joseph Pevney added, "I thought David Gerrold made a hell of a contribution. My biggest contribution was getting the show produced, because there was a feeling among the people involved that we shouldn't do it. It was a comedy, and we had no business doing outright comedy. I certainly wanted to treat it as such, because that's the way it was intended. It was highly successful in terms of audience appeal, and it turned out fine, with Bill Shatner doing bits he loved to do. The premise was humorous as hell."



I SET OUT TO WRITE THE BEST STAR TREK EPISODE EVER MADE  
DAVID GERROLD



### SEASON 2, EPISODE 17

## 'A Piece Of The Action'

Kirk and Spock try to fit in among a bunch of dim-witted gangsters, on a planet modelled after Chicago in the Twenties. "I felt that our western civilisation is based on a Judeo-Christian ethic, so what I did in this episode was say that suppose a ship crashed, and the people on the planet salvaged a book called *The Life Of Al Capone*, which they treated as their version of *The Bible*... on which they built their own society," said writer David Harmon.

"Spock and Kirk came down with this great intellect and intelligence that they possess, and they were dealing with monkeys," said director James Komack. "These guys had an IQ of about room temperature, and it was funny to watch Kirk and Spock stare at them, because they were just so ludicrous. They had this book they revered, they were mobs, they were taking over cities. Their brains just weren't working that well. *That* was a lot of fun."

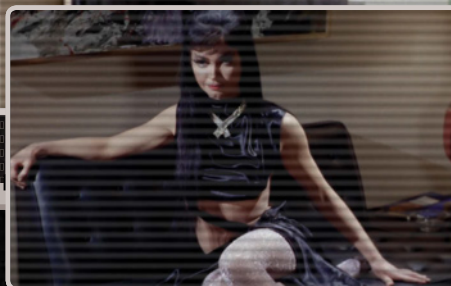
### SEASON 2, EPISODE 26

## 'Assignment: Earth'

The Season Two finale served as a backdoor pilot for a spin-off, with the Enterprise coming to Earth in the Sixties, where they go up against alien-altered human Gary Seven, who claims to be there to help humanity. Kirk, however, isn't so sure

There were certainly challenges, at least according to director Marc Daniels: "It was interesting trying to balance the episode between the regular crew and the Gary Seven character. It was also difficult, because we came back to the present and it's always a dangerous idea to take the *Star Trek* characters into the present. Suddenly you're in a very tangible situation."

As to the basic premise of the intended spin-off, guest star Robert Lansing, who played Gary Seven, said, "Gene Roddenberry [went] to futurists and scientists and asked them what advanced societies out in space might do to more primitive societies like ours. One of the futurists said they would probably kidnap children, take them to their civilisation, raise them, teach and enlighten them, and put them back as adults to lead the worlds in more peaceful ways. That was the idea behind Gary Seven."





**BIG MOVIE**

Ghostbusters

**AFTER MORE THAN THREE DECADES, IT'S FINALLY TIME FOR A NEW GENERATION OF GHOSTBUSTERS. WE TALK TO CO-WRITER AND DIRECTOR PAUL FEIG ABOUT HIS REBOOT, HIS CAST AND HIS GHOSTBUSTING ORIGINS...**

# GHOSTBUSTERS

WORDS  
POPPY-JAY  
PALMER



# GHOSTBUSTERS

## Now in Business

**T**HE GHOSTBUSTERS ARE BACK! STEPPING INTO THE SHOES OF THE ORIGINAL TEAM ARE AN ALL-NEW TEAM OF PARANORMAL INVESTIGATORS:

Abby Yates (Melissa McCarthy), Erin Gilbert (Kristen Wiig), Jillian Holtzmann (Kate McKinnon) and Patty Tolan (Leslie Jones). Stewarded by director/co-writer Paul Feig (he of *Bridesmaids*, *The Heat* and *Spy*), and featuring guest appearances by the bulk of the surviving original cast (Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd, Ernie Hudson, Sigourney Weaver and Annie Potts are all back), the message is clear: in with the new... and the old, too.

For Feig, the *Ghostbusters* reboot was something of a dream project. Luckily for him, it sort of fell into his lap, as he was shooting *Spy* when he got the call from producer Ivan Reitman, telling him he had a script and asking if he'd fancy directing it. "I was enormously honoured," says Feig, who admits to having a weird history with the film.

Back in 2008, Feig was working as a co-executive producer and sort of in-house director on *The Office*. "I'd had a couple of movies that had bombed," he confesses. "I was basically in movie jail indefinitely, so I'd gone back to television, which is fun. I was working on some great shows. But then two of my friends on *The Office* were hired to write the sequel to *Ghostbusters*: *Ghostbusters 3*. I remember ➤





“WE WANTED TO DO A SILENCE OF THE LAMBS THING THAT WAS ALSO FUNNY”  
PAUL FEIG

Reviving *Ghostbusters* was Paul Feig's dream project.

➤ just going, ‘Oh my god! If I could ever be at a point in my career where they would even consider letting me direct, that would be so cool! But there’s no way that’s ever going to happen.’

“Flash-forward a few years, I get a call from Ivan asking me, and I couldn’t believe it!” he continues, “At the time, I had a couple of movies that had done well. Having been in movie jail, I was like, ‘Oh boy, I don’t want to go back in! You have to be careful about what you pick.’”

As much as he loved the idea, he didn’t really know where to go with it. At that point, original star and co-writer Harold Ramis had just passed way, and Bill Murray had once again passed up on being involved. Although it was



Feig and his cast and crew had a blast on set in New York.



The gadgets are all getting revamped, including the Ecto-1.

a dream project in theory, both were contributory factors in putting Feig off. But Sony producer Amy Pascal thought he would be a perfect fit for it, and continued to try and persuade him to sign up.

“She was like, ‘Why don’t any of you comedy guys want to take on *Ghostbusters*?’ and I said, ‘Well, you know, it’s canon! It’s this institution!’ and she was like, ‘But it’s this amazing franchise sitting there, it’s such a great idea!’ That really stuck with me. I thought, ‘Well, it is such a great idea. There have only been two movies, and there’s so much more you can do with it.’ That was when I thought, ‘Okay, how will I do it?’”

It wasn’t a difficult decision for Feig. “With all the amazing, funny women I know, it would be great to put them in because a) I just love working with funny women, and b) it’s harder to draw direct comparisons than if you have another male cast, because then people would be like, ‘Who’s playing Bill Murray and blah, blah, blah?’ So all of that I knew how to do, that would be really fun, and I got a lot of ideas. I thought I could just reboot it and do it like an origin story and just start it again in a world that had never had a ghost attack, and that would be really interesting to me.”

Once his ideas started to take shape, Feig got talking with his co-writer Katie Dippold, who he’d previously worked with on *The Heat*. “We both wanted to do

a kind of *Silence Of The Lambs*-type thing that was also funny,” he tells us. “The idea of doing scary comedy is something I love, because it’s a great arena for funny people to be even funnier; comedy is all about emotions, heightened emotions, and all that. So the minute I called Katie and asked if she’d be interested in doing it, she said, ‘Oh god, yes!’ Then we ploughed in and put it on a very fast track.”

Feig and Dippold were keen to get the ball rolling. “Sony presumed we were going to develop it for a year and then



The cast encompass some of today’s best comedic actresses.



shoot it this summer, but I was like, 'No, no, I want to shoot it in the upcoming summer,' so it was fast-tracked. I think comedies and movies in general need a lot of energy going into it. You don't want to over-develop stuff. Everything gets mouldy, I find. It's always good to blast in when everyone is still full of energy and excitement, and you're just finding it."

**W**HEN GHOSTBUSTERS WAS RELEASED IN 1984, FEIG WAS PART-WAY THROUGH HIS FINAL YEAR OF FILM SCHOOL. "I HAD THIS one friend in college, and we were both comedy nerds. It was funny, because when you're in film school everyone just wanted to be [Jean-Luc] Godard and all that stuff," he laughs. "I wanted to be Blake Edwards and Woody Allen."

Feig made sure he always managed to catch all the big comedy films on opening night. As film students, he and his friend were constantly looking for inspiration. Little did he know how much of an

impact Reitman's latest film would have on both his future career and his life.

"I was just completely blown away," he tells us. "I didn't know what to expect because these were pre-internet days; you saw one trailer and that was it: you didn't know anything else about a movie whatsoever. So we went to see it because we loved those guys, and we loved Ivan, and we were just sitting there going, 'Oh my god, this is scary and funny!'"

"I hadn't seen that since *Abbott And Costello Meet Frankenstein*," he continues, "The audience was going crazy, and we were going crazy laughing, and by the time the reveal of Stay Puft came around, the audience laughed so loudly! I'd never heard that big a laugh out of an audience, like a celebration: 'Holy shit, this is what comedy could be!' We were so used to comedy being small and talky, and we thought, 'Wow, you can do big, not only just action comedy, but effects-driven comedy:'"

"That just seemed like the greatest," Feig continues, "It was one of those things you walk out of as somebody who creates things for a living in general, there are certain things that you see and think, 'Man! I wish I had thought of that!' That was one of them! So when it rolled around to do it, it was like, 'Gosh! I'm glad to have my shot at doing it even though it's someone else's original idea.'"

Now that he's finally had the chance to reboot a film that was such a big source of inspiration for him, would Feig be willing to come back and re-tell another well-loved story? "No, no. I've always done original stuff, and I want to continue doing that," he says. "That's what's most fun for me. This is just something that was such a great property and such a great idea that it just got me so creatively stimulated that I wanted to do it. My goal is not to be the guy who remakes lots of great old movies. That was never what I was looking to do with my life." >>

Chris Hemsworth just want to be part of the team.



## LORE AND ORDER

NYPD report: supernatural occurrences

### WOLFEN

Non-human hairs found on a series of mutilation victims point towards a non-human perpetrator. Definitely a mammal, perhaps a wolf? Will confer with a zoologist at a later date.

### THE SENTINEL

Continuous noisy neighbour reports from a Brooklyn apartment complex, but the offending home has been deserted for years. Looking into this – possible supernatural happenings?

### ROSEMARY'S BABY

Several reports from utility personnel of suspected cult activity involving the residents of an apartment building in Manhattan. Residents were chanting and acting suspiciously.

### CAT PEOPLE

A string of sightings of what appears to be a black panther roaming the streets near Central Park Zoo. Contact animal control ASAP. Could be linked to other large animal sightings.

### CHUD

A suspicious number of missing person reports have been filed with the NYPD recently, mostly concerning homeless people. No sign of bodies or leads of any kind.

### THE HUNGER

A city plumber has reported what appears to be a large amount suspicious matter (possibly mammal remains) in the pipes of a couple's townhouse. Cannibals or vampires?



# GHOST WORLD

Watch out, watch out – there's ghosts about!

## MOANING MYRTLE

Harry Potter And The Chamber Of Secrets (2002)

As a frequenter of run-down bathrooms, Moaning Myrtle can do little to actually hurt anybody. But she's as annoying as hell, so avoid her if possible.

## CASPER THE FRIENDLY GHOST

Casper (1995)

This kid may be friendly, as his name suggests, but he has also been known to cause chaos on more than one occasion. Befriend him at your own risk.

## SLIMER

Ghostbusters (1984)

When venturing onto the 12th floor of the Sedgewick Hotel, it's best to take a food offering of something tasty to distract the building's resident ghost.

## DR MALCOLM CROWE

The Sixth Sense (1999)

Beware people who look like ghosts. Beware ghosts that look like people. Beware everyone, even if they appear solid. Just don't trust anybody ever.

## JENNET HUMFRYE

The Woman In Black (2012)

Drastically reduce your chance of a ghostly run-in by avoiding all spooky mansions with mysterious pasts, especially if the past involves a grisly death.

## BIG DADDY MARS

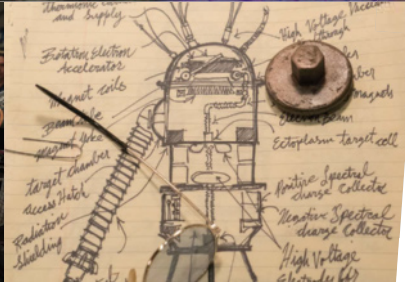
Ghosts Of Mars (2001)

For most people, it's unlikely they would ever find themselves on Mars. But should the day come, steer clear of the mines. Evil lurks all around.



The team is determined to prove the existence of the paranormal.

**“INSTEAD OF AUDITIONING PEOPLE I LIKE TO SIT WITH THEM AND SEE WHAT THEIR NATURAL ENERGY IS”**  
PAUL FEIG



Yates, Tolan, Holtzmann and Gilbert are now in business.

## CONTINUING VENKMAN, STANTZ, SPENGLER AND ZEDDEMORE'S GHOSTBUSTING LEGACY, FEIG HAS BROUGHT SOME OF HIS REGULARS BACK

for the film – like Wiig, who he worked with on *Bridesmaids*, and McCarthy, who starred in *Bridesmaids*, *The Heat* and *Spy* – but while he was penning the script with Dippold he didn't have anyone in mind. “We just wanted to figure out who our characters were and give them their own lives and let them guide us,” he says. “But once we had, we went, ‘Oh! So-and-so could be good for this.’”

Ultimately, the main reason the original movie worked was because of the excellent cast – something Feig realised. “The idea and the whole thing around them – the effects and all that – makes it fantastic, but it would have been just another comedy without the chemistry.

“So I was like, ‘Okay, I’ve got to pick, especially for the four Ghostbusters, four extremely funny people, but who are funny in four different ways, who aren’t going to step on each other, who aren’t going to repeat, you know, feel redundant to the audience who want them to have

separate personalities,’” he continues. “I spent two months putting together lists of casts and foursomes. I won’t tell you who was on it, but people would be surprised, because some of them were more dramatic actresses who I’d seen be funny, or thought they could be funny because it would be interesting. But then I went, ‘I’ve got to make sure... Who are the people who make me cry with laughter?’”

The first to be cast was McKinnon, who Feig had previously spoken to a handful of times while hanging around the set of *Saturday Night Live*. He’d read an interview with her in which she had expressed more than a slight interest in becoming a Ghostbuster.

“I was like, ‘God! She could be awesome!’ So we had a meeting, and she was so funny, and started pitching different characters. She does naturally hilarious when you meet her, so I left and was like, ‘Okay, she’s in!’ And then I thought, ‘Okay, I know what her energy is. She plays this really headstrong, but kind of weirdly macho, this kind of thing that she does, sitting with her legs spread apart and putting her foot above the

table, and it’s just so funny.’” Shortly after, McCarthy was cast. Two down, two to go.

Feig happened across Leslie Jones for the first time while watching *SNL* with his wife one night. Neither knew who she was, but she certainly made an impression: “Literally before she had finished her routine, I looked at my wife and said, ‘She is one of our Ghostbusters! She is so in.’ I called Allison Jones, my casting director, and said, ‘Does Leslie Jones know how to act?’ and she said, ‘Oh yeah, I’ve auditioned her before, and she was great.’ I was like, ‘Holy smokes!’ I went to have drinks with her in New York... we immediately hit it off.”

Feig tells us that this is not an unusual tactic for him, “Instead of auditioning people for things, a lot of the time I just like to sit with them and see what their natural energy is. Then I’ll go and rewrite the script, or readjust the script for them, for their voice. I just loved Leslie’s voice and her take on the world. She was so different from both Melissa’s and Kate’s. Then Kristen was the last piece of the puzzle, and her style of comedy was a

great fit into those other three... So the cast was born.”

As soon as the main cast was formed, it was clear to Feig that this could very well be something special. “It was one of those things where the minute I figured the four of them out, it was like I never ever felt anything other than, ‘This is it, this is it,’” he tells us.

“And then the funny thing was that, right before you start shooting you do these camera tests, and you’ll have the cast in their various costumes in front of the camera so you can check if everything looks okay together. So, at one point, I put the four of them together in their uniforms, and they just started goofing around and making each other laugh and dancing and doing kick lines, and I was like, ‘Oh my god.’ That was the moment I just thought, ‘This cast is such a winner. They’re going to be so good together.’ And my stress level went down exponentially.”

*Ghostbusters* will be released on 11 July





**MUST-SEE TV**

Stranger Things

# SOME THING WICKED THIS WAY COMES





# WE TALK TO THE CREATORS OF NETFLIX'S STRANGER THINGS ABOUT BLENDING STEPHEN KING AND STEVEN SPIELBERG FOR A TRULY EIGHTIES HORROR SHOW

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

**T**HE EIGHTIES ARE A SWEET SPOT FOR GENRE FANS. *ET* AND *THE THING* CAME OUT IN THE SAME YEAR, STEPHEN KING WROTE *THE BODY* (WHICH LATER

became *Stand By Me*), then unleashed *It* six years later. For legions of us, the Eighties are the soil from which our love for genre grew. Matt and Ross Duffer, creators of Netflix's new supernatural series *Stranger Things*, are no exception.

"I remember us talking about, 'If we could see anything on TV, what would it be?'" Matt Duffer tells us. "And what we really wanted to see was something like the classic films we loved growing up. Spielberg stuff, John Carpenter stuff, and, of course, the novels of Stephen King. I think it's less about paying homage to those things – that's part of it, but the other part was that these stories are

mostly about ordinary people; people that we could relate to, dealing with extraordinary things."

The ordinary people in *Stranger Things* are the folks living in a small town who find their lives turned upside down following the disappearance of Will, a young boy who was last seen cycling home after a *Dungeons & Dragons* session at his friend's house. His ➤

**"WE'RE TAKING THESE STORYLINES THAT NEVER COEXIST AND TRYING TO WEAVE THEM TOGETHER"**  
ROSS DUFFER

**13%**

WINONA RYDER  
She's the best

**15%**

HALLOWEEN  
Bad-ass John Carpenter synths, haunted suburbia, puzzled lawmen

**30%**

IT/STAND BY ME  
A group of kids discover something horrible and must band together, leaving their childhoods behind

**7%**

TWIN PEAKS  
It's a small-town supernatural mystery, of course it's going to be a bit like *Twin Peaks*

**35%**

ET  
Adventurous kids, distant parents, shady government figures, bikes

**THE STRANGER THINGS PIE CHART**  
What goes into making a Dark Amblin TV show?





# MUST-SEE TV

Stranger Things

## NONE MORE GOTH ICON

Charting the light and dark of Winona Ryder's genre career

**BEETLEJUICE (1988)**

LYDIA DEETZ

As the fantastically gloomy but ghost-friendly Lydia, Ryder delivered one of her best performances early on. Film: 10/10 Goth icon: 10/10



**EDWARD SCISSORHANDS (1990)**

KIM BOGGS

Ryder's next Burton collab saw her switch to popular girl, though she quickly falls for the spiky outsider. Film: 10/10 Goth icon: 8/10



**BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA (1992)**

MINA HARKER

She deployed a British accent and wide eyes for Francis Ford Coppola, failing to resist her immortal beloved despite Keanu's best efforts. Film: 8/10 Goth icon: 7/10



**ALIEN RESURRECTION (1997)**

CALL

A stumble on most fronts, Ryder plays an android who helps Ripley and team escape a ship full of aliens. Dodgy film, and not very Goth. Film: 4/10 Goth icon: 3/10



**LOST SOULS (2000)**

MAYA LARKIN

Definitely a low-point. Ryder stars as one of a group of Catholics trying to prevent the coming of the Antichrist in this Millennium-panic thriller. Film: 2/10 Goth icon: 5/10



**A SCANNER DARKLY (2006)**

DONNA HAWTHORNE

Her comeback was kick-started by Richard Linklater's Philip K Dick adaptation. She plays Keanu Reeves' spaced-out but smart girlfriend. Film: 8/10 Goth icon: 5/10



**BLACK SWAN (2010)**

BETH MACINTYRE

Darren Aronofsky's Euro-horror homage is fun if a bit overrated, but Ryder's ferocious turn as the fading star is absolutely fantastic. Film: 7/10 Goth icon: 9/10



**FRANKENWEENIE (2012)**

ELSA VAN HELSING

A deeply lovely animation about a boy and his reanimated dog, playing the deeply Goth neighbour Elsa. Film: 8/10 Goth icon: 9/10



Winona Ryder breaks type as frantic single mother Joyce.

“WE WERE EXCITED BY THE POSSIBILITY OF GIVING WINONA A REALLY GOOD ROLE AND JUST SEEING HER ON SCREEN AGAIN”

MATT DUFFER

➤ mother, Joyce (Winona Ryder), begins the desperate search, helped by the troubled local sheriff (David Harbour), while Will's best buddy Mike (Finn Wolfhard) conducts his own investigation with the help of his friends and a mysterious young girl named Eleven (Millie Bobby Brown). Mike's teenage sister Nancy (Natalia Dyer) finds that the curfew makes seeing her new boyfriend a little inconvenient, but she's about to realise that whatever's going on in the woods will affect her too.

**R**IGHT FROM THE OPENING TITLES, WHICH COME COMPLETE WITH SYNTHESISER MUSIC AND STEPHEN KING-ESQUE FONT, IT'S OBVIOUS THAT THE DUFFERS ARE

going for a very specific feel even before the show announces that it's set in 1983. “When we were growing up we had a relatively normal childhood. We were just playing *Magic: The Gathering* and *D&D* with our friends, but when we watched these films or read these books, we felt transported,” Matt Duffer remembers. “Suddenly our lives had the potential for adventure, and we wanted to try to capture that feeling again with the show.”

“But at the same time, when we watched things like *ET*, not only did it hold up with this certain timeless quality to it; there's not a lot that feels super-Eighties,” adds Ross Duffer. “It just feels like a classic fairy tale. So while we are set in '83, we didn't want to be cute about it or shove it in people's faces.”

The Duffers are relative newcomers, but they are already building quite the reputation for themselves. They helped turn M Night Shyamalan's *Wayward Pines* into an intriguing and surprising

mystery, and their skill is immediately apparent on *Stranger Things*. To Shawn Levy (*Night At The Museum*), it was clear from the script that this could be something special.

“I decided that I would only produce things that got me genuinely excited as a potential audience member,” Levy tells us. “My fellow executive producer, Dan Cohen, said to me, ‘Here are these new guys. They haven't done anything you've heard of, but just read this script.’ And I read their pilot for *Stranger Things*, immediately called them in for a meeting, and I was hooked.”

The Duffers' pitch was a series that would combine all their favourite things about Eighties genre movies and books into one mystery series, spread over three different age groups. Joyce, Mike and Nancy's storylines feel distinct, although obviously working to uncover different elements of the terrifying secret at the heart of the plot, and they're all as important as each other.

“We told [Netflix] that we'd like to think of each of these generations as existing in a different Eighties universe,” explains Ross Duffer. “So the adults are in a Spielberg film, they're these imperfect individuals slowly but inevitably coming to realise that something very extraordinary is happening around them. And then the teens are in more of an Eighties horror film like *Halloween* or *Nightmare On Elm Street*, where you're juxtaposing the themes of high school, the loss of innocence, with a supernatural evil. And then the kids are in a bit more of a Stephen King novel like *Stand By Me* or *It*, you have this group of nerdy kids who have to band together to face



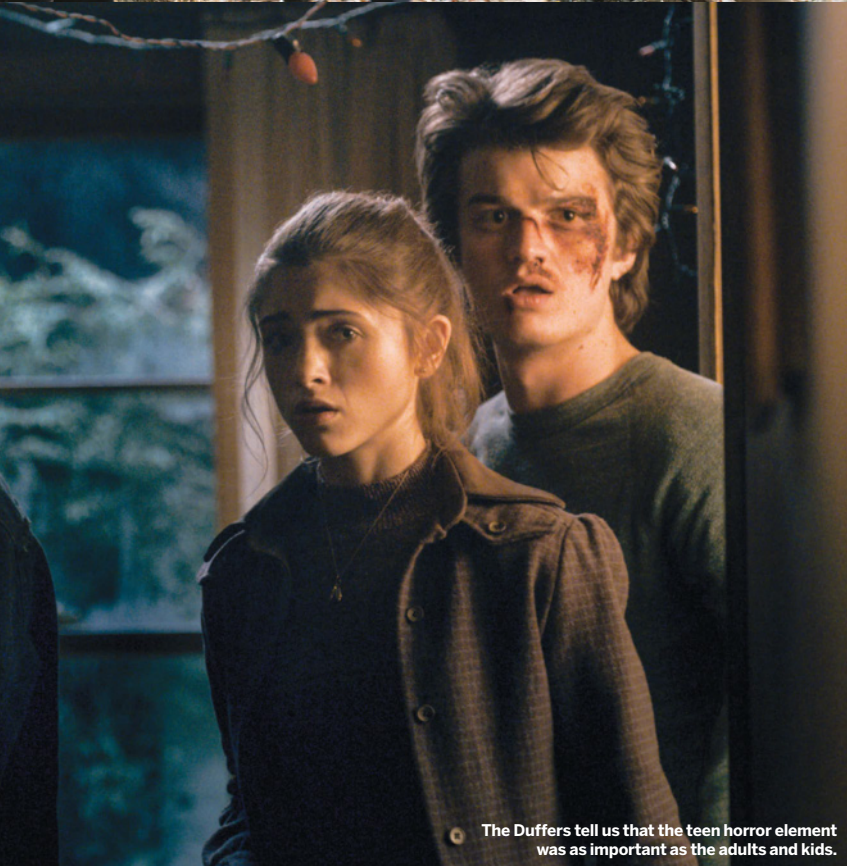
Black Mass's David Harbour plays the troubled local sheriff.







Joyce resorts to desperate measures to contact her missing son.



The Duffers tell us that the teen horror element was as important as the adults and kids.

# STRANGER THINGS

Some Thing Wicked This Way Comes



this terrifying evil. What we loved about having these eight hours is that we're able to take all these different storylines that normally never coexist in a single film, and we're trying to weave it all together."

If that sounds like a lot to pull off in a single show, it is, and it's not as though any of these plot lines are that simple. This is a show with a secret government lab, kids with strange abilities, spirits that may or not be benign (or even spirits), and there's most definitely a monster in it, but it's deeply invested in the characters.

"Balancing those components has been a fun challenge every episode," Levy tells us. "I knew early on that a huge part of the show overlaps with my own sweet spot. Having worked with Steven [Spielberg] on *Real Steel*, there are elements of this show that felt very familiar and close to me and my own storytelling. But there was always a piece to the Duffers that was new to me: their love of horror and their love of creature fear – that's very important to them."

**W**HILE THERE ARE SOME STANDOUTS LIKE PENNY DREADFUL, THERE HASN'T BEEN A HUGE NUMBER OF HORROR SHOWS ON TV RECENTLY.

Netflix's own horror series *Hemlock Grove* concluded last year after three seasons, and we're obviously still mourning the loss of *Hannibal*, but the Duffers tell us that the chance to do something scary on television was hugely exciting to them.

"I think what's tricky for us as genre fans is if you're doing a horror movie, it really is now all about the jump scares," Ross Duffer explains. "It's almost like a haunted house ride. 'How many times can you get the audience to scream in an hour and half?' That's not why we liked horror films growing up. The ones that we really responded to when we were kids, like *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Shining* and *Jaws*, they were equally as much about characters.

"We were able to tell a story about these characters that also had a monster in it," he continues, "and that's what all these filmmakers did. You look at Stephen King's short story *The Body*, which isn't a horror story at all, and then you put a monster in it and it becomes *It*. It was important to us that, if we took out the monster and we took out everything supernatural, that it would still work as a show. It just felt like the only place to tell that story right now is on TV."

As fans of Eighties genre movies, the casting of the show's lead character makes so much sense. The great Winona Ryder plays Joyce, a single mother reeling from the sudden disappearance of her youngest son, who begins to receive



Stranger Things blends classic Spielberg and Stephen King.

signs that his spirit may somehow still be in the house with her. She's very much cast against type in *Stranger Things*, but the Duffers tell us that she was the only choice for the leading role.

"Winona was our first idea, and we fell in love with it," Matt Duffer explains. "We grew up in the late Eighties and early Nineties, and we're movie buffs, so we saw a lot of Winona Ryder films: *Beetlejuice*, *Edward Scissorhands* and *Little Women* were a big part of our VHS rotation, so we were big fans of her. You want to cast someone who, if you weren't involved in a show, you would be excited to watch. And Winona is an actress who we felt we hadn't seen nearly enough of lately. We were excited by the possibility of giving her a really good role and just to see her on screen again."

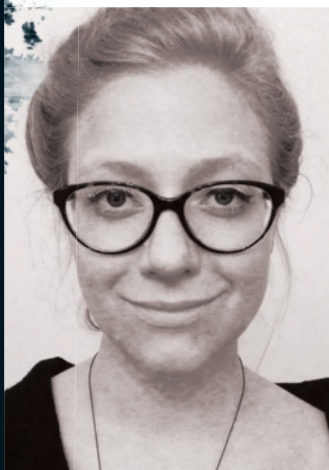
"And as fanboys, to see her in the supernatural genre, which is our favourite Winona Ryder genre, that was exciting," adds Ross Duffer. "She certainly hasn't done anything like this in terms of being a mum before. I think that excited her, to do something that she hadn't done before."

We've seen three episodes of *Stranger Things* at the time of writing, and the mystery is still unfolding. Going on the evidence, we have to agree with Levy that the Duffers are a formidable talent. They're not simply cribbing things from classics; they're creating a show that feels like it could be something from that era.

"Very often in my work, one comes across talent," Levy tells us. "But to come across talent that comes with a high level of self-assurance and clarity? That's much more rare. And the Duffers had a vision; dark Amblin is as good a shorthand as I've heard, frankly, and absolutely apropos. They knew that they wanted to very lovingly employ the tools of that dark Amblin tradition, and they also knew that they wanted to use those tools in the service of character stories that were unique and very dimensionalised. The Duffers knew what they wanted, which is the hardest thing to find in new filmmakers, and it's made them a joy to produce and support." ☞

*Stranger Things* will be available to stream on Netflix from 15 July.





FILM PRODUCER JENNIFER  
HANDORF TALKS US THROUGH  
THE PROCESS OF TAKING AN  
INDIE HORROR MOVIE FROM THE  
PAGE TO YOUR NETFLIX QUEUE

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL





The British genre scene continues to thrive and grow.

© Colin Smith

**W**ITH ON-DEMAND STREAMING SERVICES OFFERING EVERYTHING YOU CAN THINK OF AT THE CLICK OF A BUTTON, THERE HAS NEVER BEEN

so much choice for audiences hunting for a film they fancy, but what about the filmmakers? We may be able to scroll through legions of genre movies, but how has the marketplace changed for low-budget films with all this competition? Is the process of making an indie movie the same struggle it has always been?

Producer Jennifer Handorf has worked on some of the best British horrors of the last few years, including *The Borderlands*, *The Forgotten* and *The Devil's Business*, with Alice Lowe's pre-natal revenge movie *Prevenge* in post-production and sci-fi *Native* (starring Rupert Graves and Ellie Kendrick) making its debut at the East End Film Festival in July.

We caught up just after Cannes Film Festival, where she tells us that no one is using the 'H' word. "This year it was a big no-no to be a horror film," she laughs. "So everything I was pitching, I was saying, 'It's a thriller, it's a home-invasion movie, it's a pitch-black comedy.' We're all coming up with euphemisms to describe

our films to set them apart from this ocean of horror product."

From your local supermarket to the horror section on Netflix, we're flooded with titles that sound very similar to the blockbuster hits, but probably don't offer the same level of quality.

"We've all heard, 'You can make a horror film as a first-time filmmaker on a low budget and still have it be wildly received,' and that's still true," Handorf tells us. "But the problem is with the 'prosumer' revolution of filmmaking, cameras are easier to buy, you don't have to have a huge amount of professional training, and everyone has gravitated towards these genre films because they've been told this is a shortcut.

"As result, the market has been flooded with these films, and unfortunately a good number of them just aren't up to snuff," she continues. "So more experienced genre filmmakers are having to compete with this vast deluge of – and gosh, I'm trying to be nice here – but dreck. If you are that diamond in the rough, that incredibly talented first-time filmmaker who has an *It Follows*, it's a needle in a haystack."

**“THE HORROR SCENE IN ENGLAND IS VERY HEALTHY... WE’RE ONE BIG CLUB”**  
JENNIFER HANDORF

So how do you take a film from the page to the people who will appreciate it? Handorf takes us through the steps every indie movie producer needs to take.

## 1. PREPARATION

**To start with, how would you describe your role as a producer?**

It's like being a wedding planner. It's your job to find the venue, to find the orchestra, to make sure that the catering's there, that the cake is great and the bride – being the director – has whatever they want for the day. If you're not able to find somebody to bake the cake or bring the flowers then you'd better be able to do it yourself, because it's your responsibility to have everything the bride wants there on the day! ➤

## SO YOU WANT TO BE A FILMMAKER?

**The one thing you need to do**

With access to equipment for making and distributing films more readily available than ever before, anyone can put a film together and post it online for the world to see. But if you're serious about honing your craft and making the best film possible then Jennifer Handorf has one piece of advice for you: work on it.

"The best way to become a filmmaker is to start making films," she tells us. "Whether that's working on someone else's projects or grass rooting your own, the only way to do it is to do it. It's about putting the graft in, and the more favours you do for people, the more favours you have in your favour bank. So I always recommend that people try and work in every department before they make their own film, because that's the fastest and best education for figuring out how a production runs.

"I think it's a real shame when people go into their first feature not having that experience, because obviously they're going to have to learn their lessons on that set, and wouldn't you much rather learn your lessons on someone else's precious baby rather than yours?"





## INDIE SPOTLIGHT

Five UK horrors from the last decade you may have missed



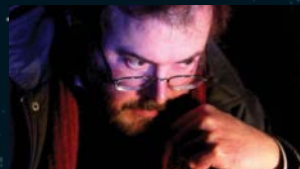
### MUM & DAD (2008)

Steven Sheil's none-more-grim domestic horror is a gruesome look at a very twisted family. Strong stomachs only...



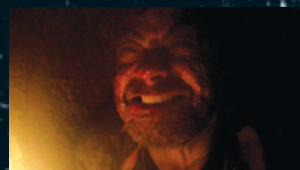
### THE DEVIL'S BUSINESS (2011)

This deeply creepy horror finds two hitmen waiting for their target to show up, but there's something else coming.



### THE CASEBOOK OF EDDIE BREWER (2012)

A veteran paranormal investigator is followed by a documentary crew and an evil spirit in this frightening film from Andrew Spencer.



### THE BORDERLANDS (2013)

Two men investigating a haunted church get more than they bargained for in this superb found-footage chiller.

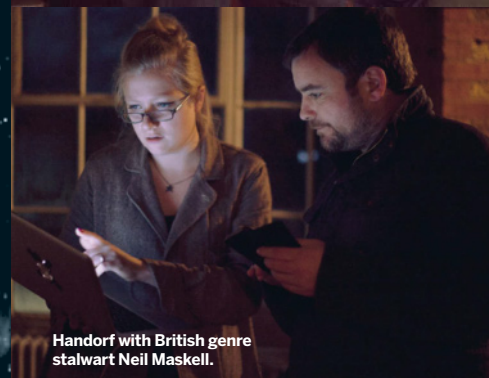


### NINA FOREVER (2015)

Student Holly finds that her new boyfriend's dead ex is still with him in this hilarious and moving dark love story.



Communication between the departments is crucial.



Handorf with British genre stalwart Neil Maskell.

## Do you usually work with the same crew?

Yes, and there are two reasons for that. One is, in the plainest possible way, laziness; it's always easier to go through your Rolodex. The other is that it's better the devil you know. You're going to be spending a minimum of six weeks with these people, and you want someone who is going to do a good job as well as not drive you completely crazy. It's nice to work with people you can trust, and really that trust comes from experience.

## What's the one thing that people should focus on when preparing to shoot?

Make sure you are as healthy as you can be, because you're not going to be good to yourself. Get on a gentle exercise regime, eat some fruit and veg and take vitamins, because by the end of it you're a wrung-out cloth. You're just a shadow of your former self! And if you can have fortitude going into that you'll be grateful!

## 2. SHOOTING

### After the struggle of putting it all together, is shooting less stressful?

The lower the budget, the more stressful that period of time is! [Laughs] I think





**“IF YOU CAN BE A GOOD GUEST FOR THE FILM FESTIVAL THEN YOU’LL EARN THEIR SUPPORT”**  
JENNIFER HANDORF

Handorf recommends working with people you know.

what makes production so stressful is you’ve got a set amount of time with which you’re going to be creating the material that you then push to its absolute in the edit. No matter how good your pre-production team are or your editor is, whatever you shoot is what you shoot, and those are the tools in your toolbox, so those days represent a limited amount of time and resources that you absolutely must make the best of. And there’s the most opportunity for chaos in those days!

### How can you limit the chaos?

Communication. Once someone’s in your production team, your brains need to be a mutual drop box at that point. People think, “Oh why does the costume designer need to know what the visual effects artist is doing?” But it’s absolutely vital. There’s a lot of unnecessary secrecy and playing your cards close to your chest, and that preparation time is golden. Communicate early and thoroughly. It’s something that everyone can improve on. Most people don’t think to do it.

### 3. GETTING THE WORD OUT

At what point do you start thinking about how to promote the film?

Before I even start, I’m asking the director or writer, “What do you want from this film? Do you want it to be a festival success? Do you want it to launch your career? Do you want it to be hugely commercial?” Those are probably the big three, but from each of those you’ve got a different plan you need to follow. It does all start from that script and before you’re even going into development, because what direction you’ll take from development will affect the outcome.

### What’s the first step?

If you’ve got the connections to be getting your film on the radar of sales agents, distributors or film festivals, it’s never too early. The exception to that rule is that you don’t want to be pushing publicity for your film too early, because you’ll run out of things to say and you’ll run out of steam. So reach out to people you know and say, “Hey, we’ve got this project underway, we’re in pre-production now, but we’d love to stay in touch with you about it as we continue the process.” If worst comes to worst, wait until you’ve got the finished project with a trailer you can cut and start sending that out to them. If you don’t know them directly, wait until you have something to say.

### 4. FESTIVALS AND SALES

How important are festivals in the life of an independent film?

Festivals are great for getting press coverage, and you have a lot of sales agents and distributors attending film festivals looking for product. What it does is put your film in the mix – it’s a foot in the door. Be sure you’re asking the right kind of press to watch it so you can get some reviews and fan responses, so you can show distributors and sales agents, “This is what people think of my film.” If you don’t have cast or any other big attachments, then a festival itself can be that thing to talk about. Further, film festival programmers are there because they love films and filmmakers, so if you can be a good guest for the film festival then you’re likely to earn their support.

How have streaming services affected those sales?

They’re coming into festivals and offering much bigger worldwide deals than territorial distributors for these independent films, and it’s shaking things up a little bit. It’s making the more traditional distributors a little bit more attentive to the competition. It lights a little bit of a fire underneath them to make sure they’re getting their offers and numbers for the films they’re actually interested in. I don’t think anyone knows quite what it’ll do at the moment, but that’s sort of the story of the film industry for years, so that’s fine!

### 5. ON DEMAND

What are the benefits of a Netflix or Amazon distribution deal to an independent filmmaker?

They pay you a fee for the rights, and the fees are still much higher than I would have thought viable for their business models, but I’m not going to complain about that! I’m sure that as their audience

reaches critical mass those figures will go down, but it’s a huge benefit to independent filmmakers because it’s a no-nonsense platform.

The subscription means that people can watch what they want to watch, that they can stumble upon your film, this tab can recommend it compared to what they were watching, they don’t have to leave the house to do it. They don’t have to seek it out; it’s just in front of them, and it’s up to them whether they want to watch it.

Is there more of a concern about getting lost in the noise of streaming services compared to a high street shop?

No, I think the noise on Netflix or Amazon is much less of a deterrent than the noise in HMV or everything else. Keep in mind for someone to buy a DVD in HMV etc, they’ve probably gone in there to find it so they’re seeking it out. The digital footfall of potential viewers is much higher online. I think if you’re doing the right promotion on your film then it’s much easier to stand out of that crowd than it is to stand out in the physical marketplace.

Finally, what do you think the current state of the horror scene in the UK is?

The horror scene in England is very healthy. I think the per capita opportunities for production are probably the same; it’s a smaller country, so there are going to be fewer people doing it. I also think geographically, because we’re all so much closer to each other, we all know each other. We really see ourselves as one giant club. It’s really welcoming, it’s really supportive, I’ve never seen genre filmmakers snipe at each other; I’ve only ever seen them help each other. I adore the horror community here. ☺

Native will screen on 1 July as part of the East End Film Festival. Visit [www.eastendfilmfestival.com](http://www.eastendfilmfestival.com) for tickets and further information.



It's vital to remember that what you shoot is all you have to work with.





## SET VISIT

Dark Matter

# DARK DAYS



Image © Prodigy Pictures/Syfy





THERE HAVE BEEN HINTS THAT A MAIN CAST MEMBER MIGHT BE KILLED OFF IN SEASON TWO OF DARK MATTER. SCIFINOW GOES ON SET TO FIND OUT IF SOMEONE'S NUMBER IS UP...

WORDS MICHAEL SIMPSON

**A** MAJOR CHARACTER IS NOT GOING TO MAKE IT TO THE END OF DARK MATTER'S SECOND SEASON. AT LEAST, THAT'S WHAT WE ARE LED TO BELIEVE BY SHOWRUNNER JOSEPH MALLOZZI DURING INTERVIEWS WITH HIM AND THE CAST OF THE

Syfy show in Toronto. Speaking at one of Prodigy Pictures' soundstages during filming, Mallozzi smiles when asked how the body count so far compares with that in the first season. "In terms of shocking deaths in Season Two, I would say there are a lot more," he says. "No one is safe."

Mallozzi is a fan of *The Walking Dead*, so it wouldn't be surprising if he does axe an established cast member to keep *Dark Matter* from becoming predictable. Even so, he won't say that is what viewers should expect, because he knows that surprising twists keep them tuning in.

"Season Two is going to be a lot of fun, because one of the things we set out to do [in Season One] was end each episode with these kind of 'Holy shit!' moments and intersperse revelations throughout," Mallozzi says. "That's what we've tried to maintain and do even more of in Season Two."

The *Stargate* alumnus co-created *Dark Matter* with Paul Mullie, first as a pilot script and then as a graphic novel, before it was put into production by *Lost Girl* executive producer Jay Firestone. The show's intriguing premise has six supposed criminals awaking from stasis on the spaceship Raza with no memory of what they've done. What happens to them over the five seasons that have been mapped out will determine whether they shake off their shady pasts or start anew.

"Ultimately, the story is about redemption, and are people born bad prior to their environment – the whole 'nature versus nurture' debate," Mallozzi explains. "I like the idea of exploring that through six or seven very different characters, so you're on this journey of redemption with them for these five years. That's the plan for those that survive, anyway. It's not going to be a happy ending for everyone is all I'm going to say, like in real life."

After discovering what they believed to be their true identities early in Season One, each of the main characters chose to be known by a number that represents the order in which they awoke from stasis. This symbolic attempt at a fresh start represented a shared aspiration that initially bound them together. As they encountered enemies throughout the first season, that bond was strengthened by a common interest in survival.

"Right from the get-go I've thought about it as like when you get into an elevator with people, and you'd rather do anything but look at each other until it stops between floors," says Zoie Palmer, who plays the Raza's resident android. "Then they're the only people in the world to you. I think that's this group of people. They wake up and it's just mistrust. Then they realise, 'Holy shit, we're in hell. We need each other.'"

Through interdependence comes trust, which leads to the characters becoming emotionally accessible to each other and the audience. This, in turn, makes it easier to accept not only that they needn't be recidivists, but also that they can care about each other.

"You see elements of that in the first season," says Anthony Lemke, who plays Three, the crew member everyone thought was an asshole until tragedy cracked his exterior. "You see those tender moments that every character has with other characters where we're reaching out as people, not as hardened criminals or mercenaries. I think that's one of the beautiful things about the show, where it allows you to explore the other side of people; the side that they keep a little bit hidden sometimes."

Those tender moments are likely to be few and far between at the start of Season Two following the events in the first season's cliffhanger finale. Possibly trying to atone for being involved in a terrorist attack in his previous life, Six (Roger Cross) sold out his crewmates to the Galactic Authority. "From Three's perspective, that act of treachery put everyone back at square one," says Lemke. "He finds himself declaring who he trusts and who he doesn't, and then we ➤"



It has been promised that no one is safe in Season Two.





# SET VISIT

Dark Matter

## WATCH THIS SPACE

Five things to look forward to in Dark Matter's second season



### CORPORATE WAR

Joseph Mallozzi has promised more space battles. Expect some of those to tie in to an upcoming conflict between the galaxy's megacorporations.



### FIVE'S KEYCARD

This mystery object was never explained in the first season, but answers are coming. "It turns out that it's a huge deal," Mallozzi promises.



### EVIL ALTER-EGOS AND PARALLEL UNIVERSES

These may or may not go together, but the former will reveal something significant about the memories everyone lost in stasis, Mallozzi says.



### NYX

The Raza is getting more girl power. British actress Melanie Liburd says her character is a "strong badass who is very charming."



### A BIG FINISH

Even the cast didn't know who the bad apple was in the Season One finale until they filmed it. "Season Two is going to end on an even bigger cliffhanger," Mallozzi says.

➤ all break into factions, and that's where we start off in the beginning of Season Two. Three has to learn to trust again."

One character who is likely to help Three do that is Five (Jodelle Ferland). The youngest member of the Raza's complement originally came aboard as a stowaway. Nonetheless, being a petty thief has given her street cred with the hard-nosed felons in the crew while still allowing her to harbour a trace of innocence. Although we're told that Five won't react well to Six's betrayal, it won't be long before she attempts to rebuild the crew's dynamic. "After a little bit she kind of resumes her role in trying to bring everybody together as a family," Ferland reveals. "That's who Five is."

Before that, Five has to survive in the maximum security prison, where the Raza's criminal element is incarcerated in the beginning of Season Two. That won't be a problem, Ferland suggests. "People definitely underestimate her, and it's not a good idea, because Five is very smart, and she's capable of a lot more than people think she is."

**THREE AND FIVE ARE AMONG THE SERIES' MOST POPULAR CHARACTERS. IF THERE IS A DEATH IN THE FAMILY THIS SEASON, THEN, IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT IT WILL BE**

either of them. Even so, the possibility of a casualty early on is hinted at by new cast member Shaun Sipos (*Vampire Diaries*). He lets slip that someone is in bad shape when the crew gets back on to the ship. That's where his character comes in.

"When I come on board, I end up doing surgery on a member of the Raza that they care about," explains Sipos, who plays an experienced doctor named Devon. "My role becomes very clear: I have a certain skill that is very valuable to them and that no one else has."



Four (Alex Mallari Jr) again proves his mastery of the staring contest.

**“YOU'RE ON THIS JOURNEY OF REDEMPTION – FOR THOSE WHO SURVIVE. THERE ISN'T GOING TO BE A HAPPY ENDING FOR EVERYONE”**  
JOSEPH MALLOZZI

"Devon tags along with the crew of the Raza because it beats being in the supermax," continues Sipos. Moreover, in common with them he has a dark past. But unlike his new associates, he doesn't want to let go of his history. "It seems that the crew is more like, 'We have a second chance and we are good people and we are making up for our past,'" he continues. "Devon is on the other side of that where he has certain demons that he's battling. He believes that he's done wrong, and it haunts him."

The introduction of Sipos and two other new faces – Melanie Liburd as Nyx and Mike Dopud as Arax Nero – lends credence to the notion that the game is up for at least one member of *Dark Matter's* original ensemble. If so, you'd think the knives would be out for Six, making him a likely candidate. Yet, Cross hints at a

reunion between Six and the crew that could mean he'll be around for a while. "It's not a situation where we're going to hug and it's all better," says Cross. "It evolves in as organic a way as possible. I think it's very clever how it's done. And maybe part of the journey in this new season is about re-establishing trust."

If Six isn't going to be offed then it's anyone's guess whether Mallozzi's hints about major casualties refer to something on a par with *The Walking Dead's* most shocking deaths or its big red herring when Glenn meets his 'demise' amid a flurry of walkers. Mallozzi is adamant, however, that fans will be shocked. "It will be interesting to see their reaction," he says with another cheeky smile. ☞

*Dark Matter*: Season Two will air from 4 July on Syfy.



Three (Anthony Lemke) isn't impressed by the Galactic Authority's buns.



Two (Melissa O'Neil) will take charge again this season, but for how long?



Former *Continuum* star Roger Cross is back as Six.



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## BIG MOVIE

Pete's Dragon

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

PETE'S DRAGON DIRECTOR DAVID LOWERY AND STAR BRYCE DALLAS HOWARD TELL US WHY THE TIME WAS RIGHT TO BRING DISNEY'S MUCH-LOVED CULT CLASSIC TO THE BIG SCREEN ONCE MORE...

# Dragon Age





**T**he current roster of upcoming Disney films could easily stretch from here to the Magic Kingdom, what with all the sequels, original animations, Pixar

projects and live-action remakes in the works right now, and it feels like more are being added by the day. But one particular film we didn't expect to see on that list was a remake of the 1977 musical *Pete's Dragon*. It's not that it's bad (because it really isn't); it's just nowhere near as memorable as the likes of *The Jungle Book* or *Cinderella*. Many have heard of it, but less have actually seen it. Some watched it as a child, but forgot it existed until the remake was announced.

The fact that the original *Pete's Dragon* isn't too well known has actually been something of a blessing for the remake, according to director/co-writer David Lowery. It has allowed him to make a film that echoes its source material, but doesn't rely too heavily on it. If Lowery was remaking, say, *The Lion King* then you can bet a lot of fans would get upset if he didn't include certain songs, scenes or characters. But it's a different case entirely for *Pete's Dragon*.

"It's an interesting one," Lowery tells us. "I think a lot of adults of a certain generation have seen it because it was one of the very first movies released on VHS, and so we certainly saw it as kids, my co-writer [Toby Halbrook] and I, because it was one of the very first movies you could get. We just watched it over and over and over again. But if you weren't part of that particular bubble, or if your parents didn't introduce you to it, or

**THERE'S SOMETHING SINGULAR ABOUT THAT FILM... IT IMMEDIATELY REACHES THAT INNER CHILD IN ME**  
BRYCE DALLAS HOWARD

you didn't just randomly discover it on your own, it doesn't have the same cultural cache that a lot of the other Disney classics do. I wouldn't say that it's been forgotten, but it certainly didn't achieve the legendary status that so many Disney films have."

However, that wasn't the case for star Bryce Dallas Howard, who plays Grace, the forest ranger who finds Pete. "My siblings and I wore our VHS copy almost completely out," she tells us. "My sister cried when she heard I was doing this film. One of my earliest memories of watching a movie was watching *Pete's Dragon*. We had a VHS copy, and the label was tearing off from overuse. There's something singular about that film – I don't know if it's a feeling, or if it's the music, but it immediately reaches that inner child in me."

Even though the original story isn't as loved or famous as a lot of the rest of Disney's library, Howard thinks *Pete's Dragon* will still stand out among the rest of the studio's live action remakes. "It felt like the kind of movie I wanted to see that I hadn't been seeing a lot of lately," she says. "It's a smart, sophisticated family film. A movie that people of all ages can truly enjoy. It's nice to do a family film that isn't full of pop-culture gags or kids being rude. It's an honest story about a boy's relationship with a creature you'll have to see to believe. Plus, the writing ➤





# BIG MOVIE

Pete's Dragon

➤ was so incredible. The moment I picked up the script I couldn't put it down. It's a story about family and love, but it's also a compelling adventure. We're not stepping on people's memories of the original. We'll stand side by side with it."

In contrast to his star, Lowery wasn't as familiar with *Pete's Dragon* as he was with the rest of Disney's back catalogue. "I had seen it a couple of times as a kid, and then I never watched it again," says Lowery. "I feel like I must have seen it when I was six or seven quite a few times, and then that was it. I had memories of it that were very distinct, but then also very vague at the same time. I didn't quite remember the plot. I didn't remember the bad guys specifically, and I didn't remember any of the songs except for 'Candle On The Water' [which was nominated for an Academy Award back in 1977], but I remembered random images and moments and feelings, and so I tried to keep those things in mind while I was coming up with our new version. But I didn't go back to see what I had forgotten. I didn't want fine little moments to carry on to the new film, because I wanted the new film to exist in its own right and stand alongside the original, but not borrow from it or pay homage."

Lowery was conscious of not strictly remaking the original material, keeping the name but not scrapping much else to do with the 1977 outing. "I didn't want to remake the original. You know, if you love the original then the original should still be there. We shouldn't try to recapture something that was done well the first time... I didn't want to transgress upon anyone's memories of the original, so we made something that is very different, but hopefully captures some of the same spirit."

**V**ery little of the original film's plot will feature in the remake; even extremely catchy songs like 'Brazzle Dazzle Day' and 'There's Room For Everyone' have been binned in favour of a fresher take on the story. "We've not a flat-out musical, but there is a musical aspect to the film," says Lowery. "There's a lot of folklore in the movie that deals with a lot of folk traditions, so there's a song about dragons in the film. [The film] has a very musical quality to it, but at the same time it's not a strict musical by any means. And that's one of the things we decided very early on. It wasn't even me that decided it! Disney said they didn't want to make it a musical this time. I think we have more music in it than they were anticipating."

## Real live action

What's coming up from Disney and its many live-action do-overs



Having grown up with Elliot, Pete is used to dragons – unlike his new friends.



Grace's father (Robert Redford) scares local children with tales of dragons.



**BEAUTY AND THE BEAST**  
RELEASED: 17 MARCH 2017

The voice cast is unbelievable: Emma Watson as Belle, Dan Stevens as the Beast, Luke Evans as Gaston, Ewan McGregor as Lumière and loads more.



**THE SWORD IN THE STONE**  
RELEASED: 2018

*Game Of Thrones* executive producer Bryan Cogman is producing and penning the script for a live-action version of the magical fairy tale.



**CRUELLA**  
RELEASED: UNKNOWN

We've already had a *101 Dalmatians* live-action remake, but this one will focus on the villain, Cruella De Vil. Better yet, Emma Stone is set to star.



**DUMBO**  
RELEASED: UNKNOWN

We're unsure how this is going to work, seeing as the main characters are an elephant and a mouse. Tim Burton is directing though, so he'll find a way.



**GENIES**  
RELEASED: UNKNOWN

This live-action prequel of *Aladdin* is leaving the would-be Prince Ali Ababwa behind to take a look at genies and how they spend their free time.





## Not enough magic

Live-action remakes that would never work



### FANTASIA

Live-action Greek gods, sentient mops and Mickey Mouse are likely to induce seizures/bad trips.



### THE RESCUERS

Neither *The Rescuers* nor *The Rescuers Down Under* warrant any kind of remake.



### RATATOUILLE

A live-action rat amongst live-action chefs would stop being cute and start being gross.



### TOY STORY

This is a terrible idea. This would be nightmarish as a live-action film. Please don't do it.

The film has also moved from a small fishing community in Maine to the mountains of the Pacific Northwest, and the time setting has changed. "It's a period film, much like the original, and it's set in the late Seventies, early Eighties – some time in there. We never really put a finger on what time it was because we didn't want to make it a literal period piece, but it definitely has the feel to a story that happened a long time ago. I love when I watch a movie and I don't know exactly when it takes place. That's what I wanted to do with this one."

Before he got involved with *Pete's Dragon*, Lowery had never worked with a studio before. Having cut his teeth on indies *Deadroom* and *St Nick*, he later worked as an editor on Shane Carruth's ultra-complex sci-fi *Upstream Colour*, before going it alone on the well-received Casey Affleck and Rooney Mara-starrer *Ain't Them Bodies Saints*. It's a diverse body of work, and his hiring for *Pete's Dragon* sees him take his career in a new direction.

**J**oining such a big franchise felt natural, especially since Lowery is a huge Disney enthusiast. "It's been

great! I mean, they really have supported the movie I wanted to make. They wanted to make the same movie I wanted to make, so it was very easy for them to support, I think!" he laughs. "Coming from independent film... I was worried that there would be all sorts of restrictions and that it wouldn't be a creatively satisfying experience, but it's been remarkable and I'm signing up for more!"

Lowery has made true on his word: he signed up to direct a live-action remake of *Peter Pan* before *Pete's Dragon* had even finished post-production. These stories – first told decades ago – remain as relevant to today's audiences as they were back then. "I think they just tap into a primal sense of wonder that really appeals to children and they deal with issue that often, when you're a kid, the first time you have to deal with these issues is when you're presented to them," Lowery says. "They're presented to you in Disney films. Some of the classic Disney films are based on fairy tales that have been around for so long, and those fairy tales are based on lessons children need to learn at some point. That's why you're told these stories. They don't age."

The director has a very firm belief as to what it was that makes a successful Disney movie: "They have great

**“WE THOUGHT IT WAS JUST A SIMPLE LARK, AND SURE ENOUGH IT TURNED INTO A THREE-YEAR JOURNEY TO MAKE THIS MOVIE”**

DAVID LOWERY

songwriters, they have great animators, they have the best artisans of their times making these classics, and it's no wonder that they've stood the test of time."

And with so many of them now being revisited, Lowery doesn't herald much scepticism, "It's interesting to see so many of them being brought to life in live-action form. From *Snow White* to *The Little Mermaid* to *The Lion King*, all of those movies don't feel dated whatsoever.

They feel as fresh now as when they were made, whether they were made in the Nineties or the Forties, and I'm curious if the new versions that are being made now will endure alongside them, or if they will be interesting adaptations but never [stick]. I'm curious if they will last the same way the cartoons did. The animated films have proven to have remarkable longevity."

As for many of us, Disney films have been a big part of Lowery's life for a long time and, like everyone, he has his favourites. "*The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty And The Beast* and *Pinocchio*. *Pinocchio* was the very first movie I ever saw in the theatre, and it made a huge impression on me. It really kind of led me down the path to making movies.

"And then *The Little Mermaid* came out," he continues, "and I think I was eight years old and completely fell in love with Ariel and started a *Little Mermaid* fan club with one other friend! When *Beauty And The Beast* came out, that just swept me off my feet like few movies had ever done before, and I became obsessed with that as well. So those three movies were high watermarks for me." Time shall tell if his version of *Pete's Dragon* shall become as iconic a movie for future generations as those behemoths

were for him. ✍

*Pete's Dragon* will be released in cinemas on 12 August.



Elliot has gone from hand-drawn to CG for this updated take on the Disney tale.



Grace (Bryce Dallas Howard) becomes a mother figure for Pete (Oakes Fegley).



### MULAN

RELEASED: UNKNOWN

The film has no leading lady just yet, but Chris Bender and JC Spink are producing, with Elizabeth Martin and Lauren Hynek writing the script.



### PINOCCHIO

RELEASED: UNKNOWN

Not much is known about this retelling about the little puppet that couldn't lie, except for the fact that Robert Downey Jr is producing and starring in it.



### PRINCE CHARMING

RELEASED: UNKNOWN

After the success of *Cinderella*, we'll finally get to see the Prince's story. Nobody's attached yet, but we're guessing that Richard Madden will return.



### PETER PAN

RELEASED: UNKNOWN

*Pete's Dragon* director David Lowery is on board to lead this remake. There are also rumours of Tinker Bell getting her own live-action film soon after.



### WINNIE THE POOH

RELEASED: UNKNOWN

Alex Ross Perry is set to write a script revolving around an adult Christopher Robin who returns to the Hundred Acre Wood. Tears are imminent.





# BIG MOVIE

Pete's Dragon

## The legend continues

Producer Jim Whitaker on Elliot, Pete, and why you should crack out the tissues for Disney's latest live-action remake...



### How did this remake of *Pete's Dragon* come about?

We were interested in telling a really emotional adventure story with Elliot, this incredible dragon and a boy, and David [Lowery] came with just a very simple idea of how to tell a story about where you belong.

We began with that really, really simple premise, which is a boy who through various circumstances finds himself in a friendship with this incredible dragon, and then is forced to go into a bigger world and ultimately come to a place where he has to discern where he truly belongs. What was great about David and Toby [Halbrooks]'s take was that it was just, even from the very beginning... it was very simple. It felt like the perfect way to [retell] what was a story that people have a very emotional connection to, and with Elliot in particular, who's just fun and has this inherent likeability. He's just a great, fun, emotional being in the movie, and so it was an evolutionary process starting with the simple idea of a boy and a dragon. We went from there.

### Do you think this is going to be one of those Disney films where people come out of the cinema having just sobbed through the whole thing?

[Laughs] I think there's an emotionality to it, absolutely! What I love about it are the rhythms of its humour and sense of adventure, and at the same time emotionality. It's a bit of a ride in the sense that you go through an emotional journey on it. I think audiences are going to feel really good about going to a lot of different places in the movie. Again, it's a very simple story, and I love that about it. These characters are great, not only Pete and Elliot, but we have a great character in Grace, who's played by Bryce Dallas Howard, and also Meacham, played by Robert Redford. I think it's going to be a really fun, adventurous journey with emotion too.

### What is Oakes Fegley like as Pete?

Oakes is really present. From the moment we met him, he immediately fell into a state of being right here, right now. As an actor you feel very connected to him because he can be incredibly present and emotionally connected. He's a very, very sweet young boy, and he has a big heart. He's also incredibly talented. When we found him in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and were about to kind of see what he had in terms of his abilities to be so connected, we felt very lucky. He's been great.

### What do you think will make *Pete's Dragon* stand out from all the rest of Disney's live-action remakes?

You know, I think it's a combination of a very grounded adventure story, and one in which there's fun to it, but there's also real emotion. The thing that most makes it stand out is that you have a magical story because of this dragon, but ultimately, if you're experiencing the film, it should feel like you're walking out into the woods or your back yard, and everything is as expected, except that this dragon happens to exist. That piece of magic, and that uniqueness of that character, I think it's going to be great for people.

### What is it about all these Disney stories that still makes them relevant to today's audiences?

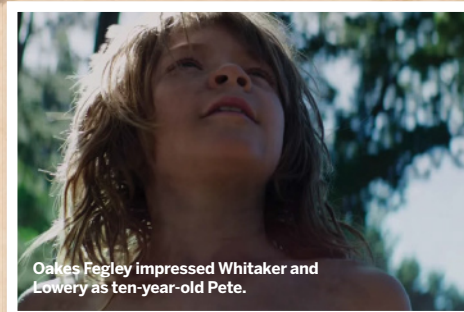
I think it has a lot to do with themes, and the primal themes that many of the movies [have, including this one]. The central idea of this movie is the question of where do you belong? Where is home for you? And I think in a world where we're exposed to a lot of possibilities and opportunities to travel and be in other places, this is a primal idea. I think it's the primal themes that are emotionally resonant, and I think that's the case for this movie. By

**TELLING THE STORY WAS AN EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS, STARTING WITH THE SIMPLE IDEA OF A BOY AND A DRAGON**

JIM WHITAKER



After spending years living in a forest, Pete's only friend is Elliot the Dragon.



Oakes Fegley impressed Whitaker and Lowery as ten-year-old Pete.

extension, those themes that come out in many of the films have a very strong feeling to them. They're very character-based and very emotion-based.

### What are some of your favourite Disney films?

That's a really good question... I love *The Lion King*. I love that and *The Little Mermaid*. Going back, I'm just trying to pierce through my Sunday evenings, you know, with all those great films that played. I loved *The Computer Wore Tennis Shoes* as a kid! [Laughs] I just love that movie! Something about the possibility of getting electrocuted and becoming a genius was just so fun to me.



As Pete's first human friend, Grace is always looking out for him.



SHOWMASTERS

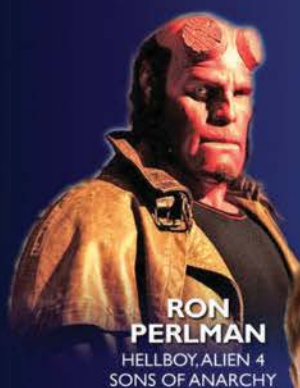
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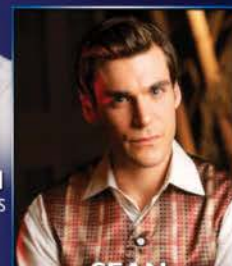
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BLADE RUNNER  
BATMAN BEGINS



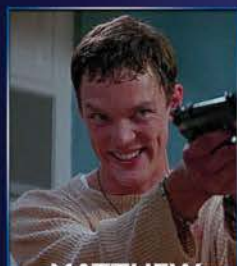
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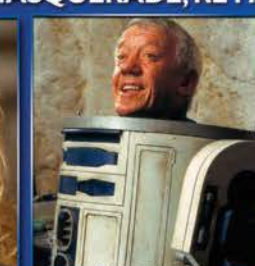
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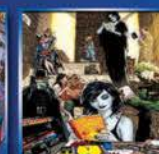
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releases out this month

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# THE BFG

"A BEAUTIFULLY IMAGINED TALE"

Read all the latest reviews  
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see now!

**TRIVIA** THE BFG IS THE FIRST FEATURE FILM THAT STEVEN SPIELBERG HAS DIRECTED FOR DISNEY.



## FILM INFO

**Released**

22 July

**Certificate**

PG

**Directors**

Steven Spielberg

**Screenwriter**

Melissa Mathison

**Cast**

Mark Rylance, Rosie Barnhill, Rebecca Hall, Jemaine Clement

**Distributor**

Walt Disney Studios

**Running Time**

115 mins



# THE BFG

## A giant story

## THE BFG VERSUS THE BFG

**Honestly, which one is the better film?**

**How does the live-action film compare to the animation?**

There's no need to pick a favourite. Both can co-exist in harmony with each other.

**Mark Rylance or David Jason?**

Sorry nostalgia lovers, but Mark Rylance wins this round. David Jason's distinct vocal performance was cool, but Rylance took it to another level with his portrayal of the big lug. But that doesn't mean you have to love Jason's BFG any less.

**Are there any changes from page to screen?**

Yes. They're pretty much the same, which means they're both different from the novel. We would tell you what they were if it wasn't for the small matter of spoilers, so in order to find out exactly what they are you will just have to watch it!

**What's the best scene?**

The mass outbreak of flatulence in Buckingham Palace. It will have adults and kids laughing their heads off. The funniest moment is Queen Elizabeth (Penelope Wilton) letting rip. She does so in a way that is emphatic and thunderous and yet rather dignified.

**Steven Spielberg teaming** up with the House of Mouse to adapt for the big screen a beloved children's novel – one by an author who is the antithesis of the sugary sentiments the famed animation house and lauded director thrive on – at first looks like an odd combo. Roald Dahl's writing, hugely popular even today, is primed with the sort of transgressive themes Disney might find improper or not quite representative of their homespun values.

It's nice to report, then, that *The BFG* has come to the big screen with its darker aspects intact. After all, this is a story about Stockholm syndrome, featuring children eaten by cannibal monsters. As the BFG cautions his new human friend, Sophie (Ruby Barnhill), kids taste like strawberries and cream to them.

The more outré subtexts and meanings have been toned down a little bit, but what's really interesting to see is how Dahl's writing has kept a filmmaker known for displays of gross sentimentality in check. In fact, it's the most emotionally restrained that Spielberg has been in quite some time. Not that *The BFG* doesn't attempt to pull the heartstrings; it does.



What's great to see is that none of it is excessive or trite.

It's worth pointing out, too, that Spielberg's own work is filled with shocking imagery and disquieting moments. He's the guy who gave us melting Nazis in *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, served up chilled monkey brains as haute cuisine in *Temple Of Doom*, staged one of the creepiest alien abductions in cinema history (little Barry's kidnapping in *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*) – not to mention writing and producing the skin-clawing *Poltergeist*.

Given the director's back catalogue, you don't need to be a genius to draw parallels to the brave folk who hid Jews from the Gestapo during the scene where the nasty giants smash up BFG's crib because they've gotten a whiff of Sophie. It might come as something of a surprise, but Dahl and Spielberg are kindred spirits; *The BFG* is a movie that has managed the feat of being very much a distinctly Roald Dahl experience and a Spielbergian affair.

A mixture of live-action shooting combined with the latest advances in computer animation, Melissa Mathison's script takes from both the novel and the 1989 British TV movie, but also introduces its own changes without feeling out of step. The anachronistic production design features a chocolate-box version of London, and the air of the film feels as informed by Victorian author Charles Dickens as it does the world of *Harry Potter* (John Williams's score furthers the *Potter* vibe).

Like the very best directors, Spielberg uses special effects in service of the story, and not the other way around. The CGI landscapes look terrific, and the colours pop and sparkle, whether it's dreams manifested as balls of energy, which flutter and whizz around in ballets of light, or the incredible-looking make-believe world of Giant Country.

Another ace up its sleeve is Mark Rylance as the eponymous gentle giant. The level of detail that has gone into the character and motion-capture performance is absolutely extraordinary. Rylance himself is nothing short of a delight; his West Country lilt, malapropisms and Lewis Carroll-esque nonsense words are all seriously endearing.

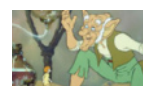
There is one bone to pick, however. The narrative pacing is a bit on the slow side. In the age of fast and furious blockbusters, the unhurried plotting might feel a tad old-fashioned, or even padded out. But this is a minor quibble really, because *The BFG* is candy for the eyes and a beautifully imagined tale of two outsiders finding their place in the world.

**Martyn Conterio**

SciFiNow scored **8** for **The BFG**

Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

## OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



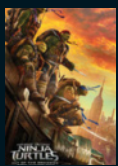
**The BFG (1989)**  
The animated TV movie premiered on Christmas Day 1989, and is rightly considered a classic in its own right.





# TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES: OUT OF THE SHADOWS Shell shocked

**Details** 12A // 112 mins // Out now **Director** Dave Green **Screenwriters** Josh Appelbaum, André Nemec **Cast** Megan Fox, Will Arnett, Laura Linney, Tyler Perry, Stephen Amell **Distributor** Paramount Pictures



**Dave Green's sequel** will keep youngsters and nostalgic fans more than entertained, for *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out Of*

*The Shadows* is a prime example of undemanding popcorn cinema.

It won't change the face of comic-book movies forever – but then it never intended to do so. A Saturday-morning cartoon created for the big screen, it's virtually critic-proof.

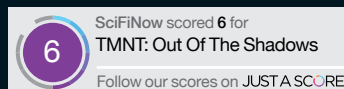
Loosely inspired by 1991's *The Secret Of The Ooze*, the latest Turtles adventure sees franchise favourites Casey Jones (Stephen Amell), Krang (voiced by Brad Garrett), Baxter Stockman (Tyler Perry), Bebop (Gary Anthony Williams) and Rocksteady (*WWE*'s Sheamus) brought into the fold. Also back once more, with feeling is Megan Fox as ace reporter April O'Neil, and Will Arnett as Vern Fenwick.

Green and his writing team have clearly read the Marvel and Pixar playbooks – Krang (a CG creation who looks like a talking tumour) has teamed up with Shredder (who is busted out of a prison van in a sequence highly reminiscent of Christopher Nolan), and they plan on destroying the world with what looks like a Death Star made out of metallic Stickle Bricks.

Donnie, Leo, Mikey and Raph – now sounding more like a boyband than characters named after masters of the Italian Renaissance – are charged with tracking down a mystical device split into three pieces. They do so while prattling on in outdated Nineties lingo (nobody says 'cowabunga' and 'gnarly' these days) and shouting out references to movies only adults will have seen (dialogue from *The Godfather* and *Taxi Driver* gets quoted). So far, so Marvel/Pixar.

In an attempt to inject a smidge of emotional depth into the cartoon-style chaos, the turtles are obsessed with being accepted by society. They even toy with the idea of becoming human (thanks to the magical purple ooze). Like Frankenstein's monster or My Chemical Romance fans, the turtles are portrayed as outcasts looking for a place in the world. For these heroes in half-shells, home is where the pizza is.

**Martyn Conterio**



**OR STAY IN AND WATCH...**



**Avengers Assemble**  
Marvel's crack team of superheroes are the example to follow when it comes to fight scenes and villainy.



# X-MEN: APOCALYPSE

**End of the world as we know it**

**Details** 12A // 144 mins // Out now **Director** Bryan Singer **Screenwriter** Simon Kinberg **Cast** James McAvoy, Michael Fassbender, Jennifer Lawrence, Oscar Isaac, Nicholas Hoult **Distributor** 20th Century Fox



**The X-Men movies**

have got form for pulling off the improbable, so it's a shame that *Apocalypse* falls victim to the problems we

thought the franchise had grown out of.

It's not a disaster; there's plenty here that works, and more than enough to get us excited about the prospect of another *X-Men* movie with the new team that Bryan Singer and Simon Kinberg have set up. But it's still sadly disappointing.

Ancient all-powerful mutant En Sabah Nur (Oscar Isaac) is released from his stasis under a pyramid, and is not happy about the state of the modern world. When he decides that it's high time to set about cleansing Earth, Charles Xavier (James McAvoy) and his students must stop the most powerful being the world has ever seen.

*Apocalypse* has a hefty running time of 144 minutes, and it's stuffed to the gills. Short-changing the big names was obviously deemed to be unacceptable; the younger versions of Cyclops (Tye Sheridan), Jean Grey (Sophie Turner), Storm (Alexandra Shipp) and Nightcrawler (Kodi Smit-McPhee) need

to be established, and Evan Peters' Quicksilver needed more screen time.

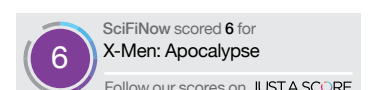
The villain may get the title, but the younger X-Men steal the film. They're perfectly cast, bringing heart and humour, and the film excels when exploring their fears and struggles. When we're with them, *Apocalypse* feels like an *X-Men* movie.

But when we're with Isaac's blue big bad, it feels like a different – and not very interesting – comic-book film. His role is essentially to deliver endless variations on the same monologue while buried in hugely distracting prosthetics, and his brand of evil never really impresses.

The CGI spectacle is well done, but comes at the expense of the emotional connection, and there's a surprising amount of brutal violence. The third act explodes into an intermittently effective but overly familiar smack-down.

When it works, *X-Men: Apocalypse* is great fun. When it doesn't, it's dull and messy. The pros just about outweigh the cons though, and it's left in a good place for whatever comes next. Hopefully lessons will have been learned by then.

**Jonathan Hatfull**



**OR STAY IN AND WATCH...**



**Hellboy**  
Guillermo del Toro's excellent comic-book adap celebrates the outsiders brilliantly.





SciFiNow  
Must  
see now!

# THE CONJURING 2

The Warrens return

**Details** 15 // 134 mins // Out now **Director** James Wan **Cast** Vera Farmiga, Patrick Wilson, Frances O'Connor, Madison Wolfe, Simon McBurney, Franka Potente **Distributor** Warner



**"There's a case** in Long Island he'd like to discuss."

In *The Conjuring*, this last line spoken by Lorraine Warren (Vera Farmiga) to her husband Ed (Patrick Wilson) alludes to the couple's most famous (and most filmed) paranormal investigation at Amityville. In fact, Farmiga had originally said "in London", conjuring the similarly oft-filmed Enfield Poltergeist case – but as the Warrens were less well known for this, the line was changed in post-production.

Now, Wan's *The Conjuring 2* offers the best of both worlds. It opens in Amityville, with Lorraine, in a séance-induced trance, seeing not just the entities haunting the Lutz home, but also experiencing a premonition of Ed's death at the hands of a demonic nun. Worried for her husband, Lorraine decides to quit all spiritual interventions, but reluctantly agrees to investigate the Enfield case, albeit as an observer only.

Whatever has possessed the Hodgson family – and in particular 11-year-old Janet (Madison Wolfe) –

may not be quite what it seems, no matter whether that is the 'Crooked Man' of children's song brought to terrifying life, the cantankerous spirit of a previous occupant (Bob Adrian), or just the psychic fallout of a broken home.

The views of the Enfield haunting's many debunkers are certainly aired within *The Conjuring 2*, but Wan invites us to see things as Lorraine does, and to share Ed's immense faith in her visions.

The reward for this suspended belief is a series of expertly managed frights in which Wan shows off his skills – and repeatedly wrong-foots the viewer – in a variety of horror modes, from ghost motifs to exorcism tropes, and from *Babadook*-style mind monsters to vicious demons.

In Wan's world, the supernatural always trumps the rational – but deep down this is as much a love story as it is a spooky tale, and if the devil usually gets the best tunes, wait till you hear Wilson, possessed benignly by the spirit of Elvis, singing a cover version of 'Can't Help Falling In Love With You'.

**Anton Bitel**

SciFiNow scored 8 for  
The Conjuring 2  
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

## OR STAY IN AND WATCH

**Insidious (2010)**  
In the spirit realm, Patrick Wilson drives one evil out of his home, only to let another in.



# MEN & CHICKEN

The beast in me

**Details** 15 // 104 mins // 15 July **Director** Anders Thomas Jensen **Cast** David Dencik, Mads Mikkelsen, Nikolaj Lie Kaas, Søren Malling, Nicolas Bro **Distributor** Arrow Films



**After watching**  
**Mads Mikkelsen**  
play the incredibly  
suave cannibal

Hannibal Lecter, seeing him nail uncomfortable physical comedy in Anders Thomas Jensen's hilarious comedy is a brilliant surprise.

Elias (Mikkelsen) and his brother Gabriel (David Dencik) are shocked when a video from their late father reveals that they're not his sons. They travel to a remote island to track down their real dad, only to find a dilapidated country house with three men who are clearly their stepbrothers (Nikolaj Lie Kaas, Søren Malling, Nicolas Bro). After a series of violent confrontations, the boys start to bond, but why isn't Gabriel allowed to see the old man? What's with all the farm animals? And what is in the basement?

Mikkelsen and Dencik make for an unexpectedly hilarious leading pair; the former constantly yearning for sex and approval, and the latter desperate to find evidence that they're not actually related. The stepbrothers are great too, with Malling impressing as the rage-filled eldest brother who was fired from the local primary school for beating an infant with a stuffed fox.

The film doesn't attempt to sugarcoat its characters' weird, compulsive and obscene behaviour, but it's also oddly good-natured. The



innocence with which Gregor (Kaas) explains the brothers' bestiality is hysterical, as is the way in which the compulsively masturbating Mikkelsen side-eyes the livestock for the rest of the film. They're a bit like the family from *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, only without the murder and cannibalism.

The slapstick violence is well done, with fights erupting over all things from cheese theft to the ranking of animal dinner plates; they are fantastically odd.

*Men & Chicken* is strange and often dark, but it's weirdly sweet, too, not to mention very funny. If you like *The League Of Gentlemen* then you're going to want to catch this.

**Jonathan Hatfull**

## OR STAY IN AND WATCH



**The Green Butchers**  
Mikkelsen and Kaas star as a pair of butchers who revitalise their business with human meat.

SciFiNow scored 8 for  
The Conjuring 2  
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

SciFiNow  
Must  
see now!





## FILM INFO

**Released**

Out now

**Certificate**

12A

**Director**

Duncan Jones

**Screenwriters**

Duncan Jones,

Charles Leavitt

**Cast**

Travis Fimmel, Paula

Patton, Toby Kebbell, Ben

Foster, Dominic Cooper,

Ben Schnetzer, Daniel Wu

**Distributor**

Universal

**Running Time**

123 mins



## NOT ALL VIDEOGAME MOVIES!

Because they're not all Super Mario Bros bad

**Silent Hill (2006)**

Okay, so the dialogue's naff, but Christophe Gans delivered a beautifully atmospheric vision of the classic nightmare, and the monsters were horrifying. Flawed but strong.

**Resident Evil (2002)**

At this point the franchise has carried on past the point of anyone actually caring if it's good or not, but Paul WS Anderson's original is actually pretty fun. That laser grid!

**Mortal Kombat (1995)**

Another Paul WS Anderson 'classic', this movie definitely has its charms. Hey, Sub-Zero and Reptile are great, and Christopher Lambert is hilarious. Kind of.

**Doom (2005)**

You know what, everyone's really snooty about *Doom*, but it's way more entertaining than people give it credit for, and solid post-pub viewing. As The Rock said, semper fi, motherfucker.



**At some point**, somebody's going to make a great videogame movie that will break the curse. While Duncan Jones' *Warcraft* certainly isn't the worst videogame movie ever made, it's sadly not the champion we were hoping for.

With the orc world Draenor on the brink of becoming a barren wasteland, a war party is sent through a portal by their sorcerer leader, Gul'dan (Daniel Wu), to claim the human realm of Azeroth for The Horde.

As the humans scramble to deal with this threat, orc chieftain Durotan (Toby Kebbell) realises that Gul'dan's dark magic will destroy this green world too. Can he find a way to forge peace, and can human knight Anduin Lothar (Travis Fimmel) keep his king (Dominic Cooper) and kingdom safe?

*Warcraft* has a lot of material to get through, and it's clear how much love Jones has for this world. At its best, *Warcraft* feels like a heartfelt epic fantasy throwback, but with the budget and effects to deliver amazing mountaintop citadels, magical face-offs and orcs beating the crap out of each other. At its worst, it feels like a clunky *Dungeons & Dragons* session.

So, the good: the effects are excellent, it's a beautifully realised world, the manifestation of magic is great, and above all, the mo-cap orcs look stunning. Durotan is fantastically detailed and emotive, and Kebbell's performance shines through, creating a character that feels strong enough to carry a film on his own.

However, it's very busy; the focus is constantly fluttering around Azeroth as characters fly, teleport and ride from one location to another. The humans' Durotan equivalent is twinkly eyed badass Lothar, but there's also young mage Khadgar (Ben Schnetzer), noble king Llane, his equally noble queen Taria (Ruth Negga), and incredibly powerful Guardian Medivh (Ben Foster), while half-orc Garona (Paula Patton) is torn between her human captors and the orcs who enslaved her. There's not a huge amount of time for any of them, and the physical journeys are kept too separate for any group dynamic to form.

What we get are fragments of characters, as each one expresses regret over a

connection missed or lost. The intended goal seems to be showing us that they all have more in common than they think, which plays nicely into the film's themes of immigration and climate change, but the result is that most of these characters feel frustratingly underwritten.

There's real promise here, particularly when the cast (notably Fimmel and Patton, the latter of whom thankfully ditches the slave rags for armour and a sword relatively quickly) get to enjoy themselves, but everyone involved takes things so seriously that there's a weird lack of joy to it. Foster works well with his aloof Guardian, but everything Medivh does signposts a later development.

Fans of the games may find a treasure trove of Easter eggs, and the visuals are undoubtedly impressive, but it's far too choppy to keep any sense of momentum or ever really get us invested in any one storyline. When *Warcraft* is weird, it's fun, but the dialogue, which frequently becomes functional or ponderous, is a recurring problem. It's messy, overstuffed and clunky, and our love of battle animals and scrapping orcs can only carry us so far. A director's cut might offer more time for development, but what we've got is an ambitious disappointment with its heart in the right place.

**Jonathan Hatfull**



SciFiNow scored **5** for  
**Warcraft: The Beginning**  
Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

### OR STAY IN AND WATCH...

**Dawn Of The Planet Of The Apes**  
Matt Reeves' intelligent and emotional sequel saw the human-vs-ape conflict evolve.



# DEADPOOL

## Tearing down the fourth wall

**Details** 15 // 140 mins // 2016 // **DVD** // **Released** Out now **Director** Tim Miller  
**Cast** Ryan Reynolds, Morena Baccarin, TJ Miller, Ed Skrein, Gina Carano **Distributor** 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment



**Quite how Deadpool's** success will impact the comic-book movie genre remains to be seen.

We know that the next *Wolverine* movie will be rated R, but will anyone else be able to capture exactly what it was that convinced legions of audiences to turn up, and to go back for a second viewing? Maybe, maybe not, but the fact remains that Tim Miller's long, long-awaited *Deadpool* was a breath of fresh air.

For anyone who didn't see it at the cinema (are there any of you left?), Ryan Reynolds plays the titular character, a



smart-mouthed mercenary who volunteers for a dangerous experiment after being diagnosed with terminal cancer. The result is that he's turned into a mutant who can recover from any wound, at the expense of his beautiful face. Now a nigh-on immortal killing machine, he decides to hunt down the bastard who did this to him.

So does *Deadpool* hold up to a second viewing? Happily, yes, for the most part. Reynolds is an absolute joy as Wade Wilson, and he makes the most of finally getting to play the character properly. Every moment of fourth wall-breaking, incident of gory ultraviolence and bizarre sexual reference (hello, unicorn) is wonderful and hilarious.

That sense of irreverent glee is infectious, even when the film bumps up against the inevitable superhero movie structure it's kind of forced into. *Deadpool* absolutely does make fun of all the comic-book movie tropes, but it does still use them, something that does become more apparent upon



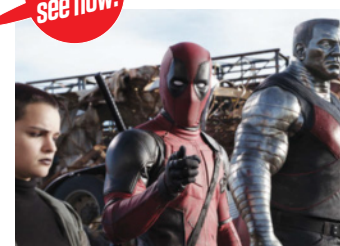
SciFiNow  
Must see now!

rewatching. Similarly, the film's budget limitations are slightly more visible, but it's hard to hold that against it.

It's especially difficult when the film is so much fun. Leaving aside the fact that this is as funny as Reynolds has ever been, TJ Miller's sidekick Weasel is hilarious, Morena Baccarin is great as the tough Vanessa, and we need much, much more of Negasonic Teenage Warhead (Brianna Hildebrand). The villains feel a little neglected, but then you've got Deadpool breaking his arms trying to beat up Colossus, and that's brilliant.

*Deadpool's* not perfect, but it's still a damn good time. Bring on the sequel.

**Jonathan Hatfull**



8

SciFiNow scored 8 for  
**Deadpool**

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**



**Punisher: War Zone**  
Lexi Alexander's *Punisher* is as relentlessly, stupidly violent as the comics, and all the brilliant for it.

# PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES

## The great estate

**Details** 15 // 107 mins // 2016 // **DVD** // **Released** Out now  
**Director** Burr Steers **Cast** Lily James, Sarah Riley, Douglas Booth, Lena Headey  
**Distributor** Lions Gate Home Entertainment



**A Jane Austen** classic with added flesh-eating zombies sounds like a genius concept. If Jane Austen classics tend to lack anything, it's threat. But when actually realised on screen, it falls a little short.

The regal 19th century costumes and the production design add a dash of flair to the apocalyptic wasteland, but it doesn't take long for it to feel a bit been-there-done-that. There are times when being a costume drama that's also a zombie film really works, but there are also times when it doesn't.

The performances are fair too. James is a good lead as Lizzy Bennet, and Matt Smith brings some silly laughs as Collins. You'll

easily find something to like if you're partial to stately manor drama or an undead invasion. But neither are improved by combining them.

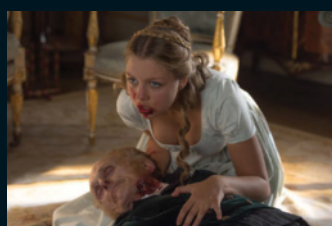
If either sub-genre usually fails to tickle your pickle then you might want to avoid this.

**Poppy-Jay Palmer**

6

SciFiNow scored 6 for  
**Pride And Prejudice And Zombies**

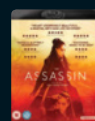
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# THE ASSASSIN

## A beautiful death

**Details** 12 // 105 mins // 2015 // **DVD** // **Released** Out now  
**Director** Hsiao-Hsien Hou **Cast** Qi Shu, Chen Chang, Fang-yi Sheu, Hsieh Hsin-Ying  
**Distributor** Studio Canal



**After appearing in** many a critic's 'Best of 2015' list, Hsiao-Hsien Hou's gorgeous wuxia film *The Assassin* has arrived on Blu-ray, and you are going to want to see it in the highest-possible definition. It's beautifully made, immersing the viewer in an 8th century China of uncertain political stability and murky pasts.

Qi Shu plays Yinniang, the titular character who is sent by her master to kill powerful lord Tian Ji'an (Chen

Chang). Ji'an and Yinniang were once engaged before political manoeuvring interfered and she was sent away. Will she be able to put her feelings aside to do the job?

The plot is clearly not the most important element of *The Assassin*. The renowned Taiwanese director is much more interested in creating an atmosphere, and eschews most of the more fantastical elements of the wuxia martial arts genre for a film that offers stillness with sudden bursts of action. Much goes unexplained as we're deliberately kept at a certain distance from the characters, but *The Assassin* is a stunning and bewitching experience for those with the patience for it.

**Jonathan Hatfull**



SciFiNow  
Must see now!

8

SciFiNow scored 8 for  
**The Assassin**

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE





# THE FOREST

Woodland terrors

**Details** 15 // 93 mins // 2016 //  **Released** Out now **Director** Jason Zada  
**Cast** Natalie Dormer, Taylor Kinney, Yuki Yoshi Ozawa, Eoin Macken **Distributor** Icon



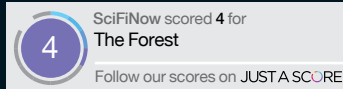
**Having been big fans** of Natalie Dormer for a while now, it's nice to see the *Game Of Thrones* and *Hunger Games* actress get the starring vehicle she has warranted. Unfortunately, it's not the one she deserves, as a couple of jump-scares aside, it's not that great.

Taking place in Japan's Aokigahara (aka the ominously named 'Suicide Forest'), Dormer's character heads to the area on a hunch after her identical twin sister goes missing, leading to the opportunity for various scares and

confusing goings-on as the creepy surroundings take their toll on her psyche. It's all very ambiguous, but not in a particularly inventive way.

There are some good ideas in among everything, but *The Forest* falls into the cliché horror pitfalls of not being particularly scary and ending up ever so lightly incoherent in places. Moreover, the final twist is signposted from a mile off, leaving little about this to recommend.

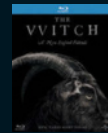
**Steve Wright**



# THE WITCH

Something wicked this way comes

**Details** 15 // 93 mins // 2015 //  **Released** 18 July **Director** Robert Eggers  
**Cast** Anya Taylor-Joy, Ralph Ineson, Kate Dickie **Distributor** Universal Pictures UK



**Genuinely scary** horror movies are few and far between these days, but on the back of the terrifying trailer, this is exactly what we were hoping for from Robert Eggers' debut.

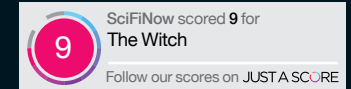
Happily (is the word even appropriate in this context?), he delivers one of the most chilling tales in recent memory.



Putting the disappointment aside at the film revealing its hand so early, pretty much everything else is spot on. From the on-point performances of the child leads (Anya Taylor-Joy is a revelation as the protagonist) to the pervading sense of dread radiated by the doom-laden atmosphere, picking faults is genuinely difficult. Despite the heavy religious imagery, this is more a cautionary tale of enforced isolation than it is an attack on evangelicalism.

So in other words, the festival hype was justified. Fans of films like *The Crucible* and *The Witchfinder General* will find a lot to love here, and we can't recommend it any more highly.

**Steve Wright**



# QUEEN OF EARTH

Friends like these

**Details** 15 // 90 mins // 2015 //  **Released** 11 July **Director** Alex Ross Perry  
**Cast** Elisabeth Moss, Katherine Waterston, Patrick Fugit, Kentucker Audley, Kate Lyn Sheil **Distributor** Eureka Entertainment



**Alex Ross Perry** has been hailed as one of American independent cinema's most exciting auteurs, and hot on the heels of his brilliantly bleak comedy, *Listen Up Philip*, comes this searing homage to the psychological horrors of Roman Polanski.

Elisabeth Moss is Catherine, a woman who's been devastated by her recent break-up. She heads to the lakeside getaway of her best friend Virginia (Katherine Waterston), but she's not going to get the rest and recuperation she was hoping for. As Catherine inches further and further towards a nervous breakdown, we start to see just how toxic this friendship is.

Perry creates an atmosphere that is quiet and still, but unbearably tense. Every glance is loaded, every new arrival an unwelcome intruder, every minor irritant the potential spark that will explode this situation that just somehow keeps going on. As it

progresses, the question of who we're meant to be rooting for remains murky. Catherine is unquestionably in need of help, but perhaps Virginia has her reasons for not giving it.

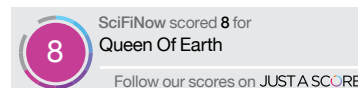
Moss is stunning, and Perry gives her a great platform to demonstrate her talents, starting with an incredible opening sequence in which we watch her react (badly) to being told her relationship is over. Once at the cabin, Catherine seems to be wounded by every little thing, but there are glimpses of something terrifying that give the film a real chill. If Virginia keeps pushing, what is Catherine capable of?

Waterston is excellent as the second half of this poisonous duo, forcing us to question how much of her concern is a façade and how much she wants Catherine to fall apart. They poke at each other's weaknesses, finding raw nerves like perceived nepotism and failed potential, and they don't stop. The more time we spend with them, the more uncomfortable things get.



*Queen Of Earth* is an uneasy viewing experience in the best possible way. With two towering performances and a filmmaker masterfully tightening the screws, this is superb.

**Jonathan Hatfull**



## IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



**Repulsion**  
 Catherine Deneuve snaps in Roman Polanski's masterful psychological horror from the Sixties.





## FILM INFO

### Released

18 July

### Certificate

Ranges from PG to 12

### Directors

Robert Wise, Nicholas Meyer, Leonard Nimoy, William Shatner, David Carson, Jonathan Frakes, Stuart Baird

### Cast

William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley, James Doohan, Walter Koenig, George Takei, Nichelle Nichols, Patrick Stewart, Jonathan Frakes, Gates McFadden, Brent Spiner, LeVar Burton, Marina Sirtis, Michael Dorn

### Distributor

Paramount

### Running Time

1,132 mins



# STAR TREK: I-X

Still boldly going

**What with it** being 50th anniversary year, what better time to revisit every feature-length outing in the pre-Abrams *Star Trek* canon? With I-X re-released, how do they hold up today?

For *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, the answer is 'not great'. The film was home to much disagreement and script-rewriting, with the result being a plodding tale that both fails to make use of its reunited cast and hold up as a film in its own right. When your main bad guy is an angry cloud you know you have problems.

Thankfully, *Wrath Of Khan* improved things in every respect. Obscure TOS villain Khan is reprised by Ricardo Montalban, the result being an absolute barnstormer that takes the crew to hell and back, with a breathtaking final act and one of sci-fi's most memorable tear-jerkers.

Absent for most of the film, Leonard Nimoy took on director duties for *The Search For Spock*, and it's a solid outing. There's a lot to enjoy here, from the crew going renegade to yet another defining moment for Kirk. If anything, it serves to highlight how pivotal a character Mr Spock is.

Doomed to be remembered as 'the one with the whales', *The Voyage Home's* budget was under half that of the first movie. The plot dictates that most of the action takes place

in San Francisco rather than the alien settings we're accustomed to. There's a lot of amusement to be gained from the fish-out-of-water scenarios though, with the loose trilogy that began with *Wrath Of Khan* rounding off in a solid manner.

Shatner replaced Nimoy in the director's seat for *The Final Frontier*, and while it has a poor reputation, it's really not that bad. Firstly, it displays a level of ambition not seen from the series in a while, with the action literally leap-frogging to the end of the galaxy and back. Sure, there are low points (Shatner essentially fronting up God remains odd), but it's not the series' nadir that it is made out to be.

*The Undiscovered Country* brings the TOS cast's run to a satisfying end, as the crew attempts an alliance with their long-time Klingon foes. *Wrath Of Khan* director Nicholas Meyer returns, and although the results are mixed, it does contain some great meta moments, and the Cold War parable at the centre of the story is integrated well.

*Generations* is designed as a passing-of-the-guard of sorts, even though only Scotty, Chekov and Kirk appear from TOS (the latter's much-hyped encounter with new captain doesn't amount to much). Regardless, the new era is ushered in seamlessly, with Malcolm McDowell relishing his opportunity to chomp on the scenery as criminal mastermind Soran.

For Picard and co though, *First Contact* remains the one to beat. Seeing the crew journey across time as they try to save the future from the machinations of the Borg – undoubtedly *Trek's* most terrifying



adversaries – the stakes feel truly real. At the centre of it all are some truly excellent performances, with Patrick Stewart using all his experience to channel Picard's inner turmoil, Brent Spiner putting in another star turn as Data, and Alice Krige's Borg Queen repulsing and impressing in equal measure.

Recently, some fans voted *Into Darkness* the worst *Trek* movie. Either they haven't watched *Insurrection* or have erased it from their memories, as it's a definite low point. It all feels cheap, with an incomprehensible plot and no memorable villains. In all honesty, there's really not a lot to enjoy here.

*Nemesis* isn't much better. Having been the beneficiary of renewed interest due to Tom Hardy's presence as lead villain Shinzon, it's definitely not a high point of his career, but the rest of the film's okay. Essentially it's more of the same, with Picard and Data concluding their strong character arcs, while everyone else lack screen time. The biggest gripe is the seemingly arbitrary sacrifice of a much-loved character, but other than that it's serviceable enough.

With the new era of *Trek* in full swing, it definitely doesn't hurt to take a look back. We certainly enjoyed the journey.

**Steve Wright**

### IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



**Star Trek**  
Having worked your way through the last lot, watching this becomes an interesting experience.



## ROGUE'S GALLERY!

The movies' most memorable big bads



### Khan (Ricardo Montalban)

Need we say any more? Just don't mention the words 'Benedict Cumberbatch'.

### Borg Queen (Alice Krige)

Turns out she had a very different understanding of the word 'assimilation'.

### Sybok (Laurence Luckinbill)

One of the few genuinely multi-layered *Trek* villains, it's a pity we didn't see more of him.

### Soran (Malcolm McDowell)

The role itself was a tad underwritten, but seeing McDowell is always a treat.

### Shinzon (Tom Hardy)

The actor admitted to being 'terrified' while filming *Nemesis*, with this coming across in the series' most vulnerable villain.




JUST A SCORE THE MOTION PICTURE 4 THE WRATH OF KHAN 9 THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK 7 THE VOYAGE HOME 6 THE FINAL FRONTIER 5 THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY 6 GENERATIONS 6 FIRST CONTACT 7 INSURRECTION 4 NEMESIS 5



# ENEMY MINE

## Space banter

**Details** 12 // 108mins // 1985 //  **Released** Out now **Director** Wolfgang Petersen **Cast** Dennis Quaid, Louis Gosset Jr, Bumper Robinson, Brion James, Richard Marcus, Carolyn McCormick **Distributor** Eureka Entertainment Ltd



**Enemy Mine** is one of those strange cases where everything about the film makes it look like it's going to be terrible, from the

poster and the synopsis to the tagline ("Enemies because they were taught to be. Allies because they had to be. Brothers because they dared to be"), but it actually turns out to be pretty great.

In a universe where deep-space travel and barbaric warfare is the norm, Willis Davidge (Dennis Quaid) finds himself stranded on a desolate planet with no means of escape. It's not long before he stumbles across another life form but, much to Willis' chagrin, that life form just so happens to be a Drac called Jerry (Louis Gosset Jr), a member of an alien race that Willis was previously fighting in the intergalactic war. He quickly realises that the only chance he has

of getting off the planet is to team up with his sworn enemy. After a series of shared experiences and a lot of trash talk, the enemies eventually become allies, even if each one still thinks the other is a pain in the ass.

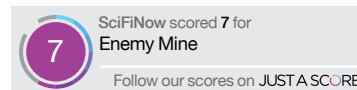
With the full-flung war, spaceships and deserted planets, *Enemy Mine* sets itself up as a hard science-fiction adventure, but rather surprisingly it gradually transforms into a comedy. The camaraderie that builds between Willis and Jerry is actually kind of sweet to watch. They don't just become allies; they become friends, albeit friends that still brutally insult each other at every opportunity they get. It's like a buddy road trip, but without the travelling bit. The space banter is strong with this one.

It's also incredibly weird. From Dennis Quaid's fake beard to an alien pregnancy, nothing about the film suggests that involved in the creative

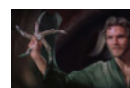


processes were taking it particularly seriously, but that all works in *Enemy Mine's* favour. As with most Eighties sci-fi B-movies, the production values are kind of low, but still not even that takes away from how funny, weird, exciting and strangely emotional it can be.

**Poppy-Jay Palmer**




**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**



**Krull**  
A prince and his companions head into deeper space in an attempt to rescue his bride from aliens.

# COCOON

## Old becomes new

**Details** PG // 117 mins // 1985 //  **Director** Ron Howard **Cast** Don Ameche, Wilford Brimley, Hume Cronyn, Brian Dennehy, Jack Gilford, Steve Guttenberg **Distributor** 20th Century Fox



**When a group of senior citizens** cooped up in a residential home discover a collection of strange

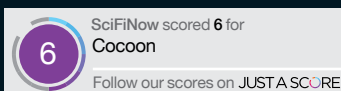
alien rocks in the home's indoor pool, they feel obliged to have a poke around to find out what's what. But upon touching the rocks, the residents undergo a mysterious change, and quickly find they have a type of youthful energy that they hadn't experienced for decades.

Three decades after its first release, *Cocoon* is still as entertaining and heart-warming as

ever. Sure, it has its faults – the visual effects aren't all that good, even by its era's standards, and the storyline with sailor Jack and the Antareans often toes the line between necessary and dull – but the film's cast of older characters and the relationships between them continue to be an absolute delight.

To mark *Cocoon's* 30th anniversary, the film has been transferred into stunning high definition for Blu-ray and updated with a whole load of special features, including commentary from director Ron Howard, new featurettes, the original theatrical trailer and much, much more. It's a must-have for both old and new fans alike.

**Poppy-Jay Palmer**



# BLOOD BATH

## If at first you don't succeed...

**Details** 12 // 1963-66 //  **Released** Out now **Directors** Rados Novakovic, Jack Hill, Stephanie Rothman **Cast** William Campbell, Patrick Magee, Linda Saunders, Sid Haig **Distributor** Arrow Video



**Anyone shelling out** for Arrow Video's *Blood Bath* collection will be getting four movies, although those films share a lot of

footage, to be specific. Representing one of the greatest examples of Roger Corman's business-like approach to movie-making, it gets the kind of loving treatment that it's hard to believe anyone involved in the making of these films ever expected.

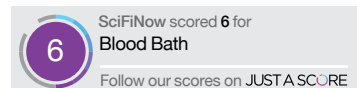
Starting life as a Yugoslavian-made thriller titled *Operation Titian* starring



William Campbell and Patrick Magee, the film was recut with new footage into more of a horror thanks to Jack Hill, before being turned into a vampire movie (*Blood Bath*) by Stephanie Rothman, then getting a new TV edit titled *Track Of The Vampire*.


There's some fun to be had with eac, thanks to the hammy performances from Campbell and Magee and the Dubrovnik location (which does look lovely in black and white), but the story behind the production and endless edits is much more interesting. Tim Lucas' comprehensive video essay 'The Trouble With Titian', which goes all the way through the origins (and the involvement of a young and hungry Francis Ford Coppola) is superb. This is mainly for completists, but it's a fascinating artefact with excellent supplementary material.

**Jonathan Hatfull**





# THE LEFTOVERS Fighting for scraps

**Details** TBC // 565 mins // 2015 //  **Released** Out now **Creators** Damon Lindelof, Tom Perrotta **Cast** Justin Theroux, Amy Brenneman, Christopher Eccleston, Liv Tyler **Distributor** Warner Home Video



**Having exhausted the source material** provided by co-creator Tom Perrotta's book during the first season, *The Leftovers* found itself

free to head in whatever direction it wanted for its second year. But how did it get on with this newfound freedom?

Very well, as it turns out. Relocating to the town of Miracle – apparently untouched by the disappearances that affected everywhere else in the world – Kevin Garvey (Justin Theroux), his daughter Jill (Margaret Qualley) and new lover Nora (Carrie Coon) seem to have found somewhere they can settle. But after another apparent wave of disappearances, coupled with Kevin's continued fragile mental state, it seems like things are about to get worse before they can get better.

As good as Season One was, it proved to be an utterly harrowing viewing experience at times, and while the second season doesn't exactly qualify as being light-hearted, it's definitely easier watching for the most part. Without spoiling the plot, Christopher Eccleston's permanently shut-upon former reverend Matt Jamison has a better time of things, and Jill actually gets to smile a bit this season.

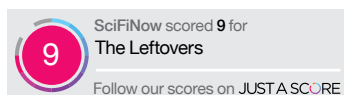
Even so, there are plenty of excuses to keep things downcast. TV's most punchable cult, the Guilty Remnant, are still lurking around doing their best to keep everyone down in the dumps,



and themes of child abuse, unresolved issues and learning to live with grief are present throughout. Beyond this, it's just incredibly well made. From the production values and soundtrack through to the wonderfully ambiguous nature of the performances, everything is spot on. There are so many layers that it's hard to know where to start.

Constantly unmissable and bearing so many twists and turns – the finale remains one of the most shocking we've seen in recent years – we remain surprised that this hasn't garnered the critical acclaim that it clearly deserves. We suspect that this will be a show that becomes more popular in retrospect than it is currently, but in the meantime we'll savour the fact that it still exists.

**Steve Wright**



## IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



**Lost**  
Tonally different, but plenty of Damon Lindelof hallmarks remain in the brain-baffling island mystery.



Season One

SciFiNow  
Must see now!

# SUPERGIRL Up, up and away!

**Details** TBC // 860 mins // 2015 //  **Released** 25 July **Creators** Ali Adler, Greg Berlanti, Andrew Kreisberg **Cast** Melissa Benoist, Mehcad Brooks, Chylér Leigh, Jeremy Jordan, David Harewood, Calista Flockhart **Distributor** Warner Home Video



**Superhero saturation point** has to be close now, what with all the different masked vigilantes doing the rounds on TV

nowadays. Ultimately, this only made it all the more gratifying to see Supergirl swoop in and inject fresh air into the scene.

Taking place in a world where a young Kara Zor-El (Melissa Benoist) crash-lands on Earth after her more famous cousin, she must balance her duties as a superhero alongside working with her adopted sister Alex (Chylér Leigh) at defence organisation DEA and her civilian identity at media conglomerate CatCo. It's *Lois & Clark* meets *Ally McBeal* – which is especially fitting considering that Calista Flockhart stars here as the Miranda Priestley-esque Cat Grant.

Ostensibly using the monster-of-the-week trope as a backdrop, there's quite a lot going on. For one thing, there's a love quadrangle of sorts with Kara, James Olsen (Mehcad Brooks), Lucy 'Lois's sister' Lane (Jenna Dewan-Tatum) and arch friend-zoner Winn (Jeremy Jordan); then there's the whole mystery of what's going on with Alex's boss Hank (David Harewood); the sinister machinations of stranded Kryptonians, and the

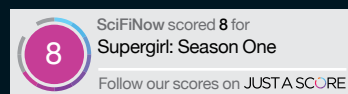


meddling of tech mogul Maxwell Lord (Peter Facinelli).

At 20 episodes long there's always the risk of filler instalments, but the show uses the time as an excuse for levity, with 'Human For A Day' and *The Flash* crossover 'Worlds Finest' being notable highlights. Not all the cast are on the same wavelength (Winn and Olsen need to up their game), but this is more than made up for by the tour de force that is Cat Grant. Biting, razor-sharp a, yet sympathetic.

So all in all, it's a solid first outing for *Supergirl*, and with the series' future now in the hands of The CW, the future looks suitably optimistic.

**Steve Wright**




## IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



**Lois & Clark**  
There are plenty of knowing nods to the Nineties' *New Adventures Of Superman*.



# KILLJOYS **Not a downer**

**Details** 15 // 426 mins // 2015 //  **Released** Out now **Creator** Michelle Lovretta  
**Cast** Hannah John-Kamen, Aaron Ashmore, Luke Macfarlane, Rob Stewart, Morgan Kelly, Thom Allison **Distributor** Universal Pictures UK



**Watching the first** episode of *Killjoys* produces the feeling you might get if you stumbled into a mosh pit after spending the day in a

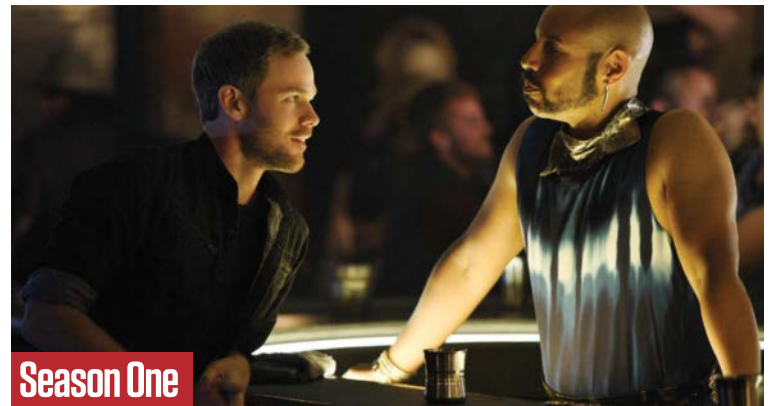
library: it's an in-your-face roller-coaster ride through space that spends little time on dialogue or exposition.

Aside from being largely confined to one planet and its moons, *Killjoys'* universe is a corporatocracy similar to those seen in Syfy's other space operas, *Dark Matter* and *The Expanse*. Don't expect this to make it easier to get to grips with the social and political backdrop, though. Details are thrown at you so fast that it's hard to get orientated.

By contrast, the premise is high-concept. Dutch (Hannah John-Kamen) and John Jaqobis (Aaron Ashmore) are so-called reclamation agents (aka 'killjoys') who pick up warrants to catch

wanted fugitives. Dutch is a gun-totting bad-ass and kung-fu master, whether dressed in leather or a ball gown. 'Johnny' is no wimp either, despite being the show's obligatory tech nerd. The two originally met when John tried to steal Dutch's ship, but they are now bound by a strong platonic bond.

This relationship is threatened after the pair rescues John's older brother, D'Avin (Luke Macfarlane). He's a muscular ex-soldier who makes eyes at Dutch in a way that promises trouble when, a few episodes in, the team

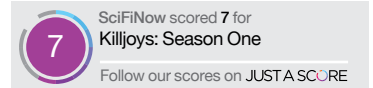


becomes a trio. This also marks the point at which the action slows down and characters start to be fleshed out. Dutch, it is revealed, is still dogged by a psychopathic mentor (chillingly played by Rob Stewart) who taught her to kill as a child. D'Avin, meanwhile, suffers from PTSD-induced flashbacks that trigger violent episodes.

As the season proceeds, more flavour is added by the increasing involvement of supporting characters, particularly Pree (Thom Allison), the bartender at the killjoys' local, and Alvis (Morgan Kelly), a monk with a

cause. The overall result is an edgy and suspenseful romp that does more than just frantically recycle tropes, making *Killjoys* one mosh pit you might want to jump back into.

**Michael Simpson**



## IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



**Dark Matter**  
 Another Syfy space opera with humour, action, suspense and a female lead you wouldn't mess with.

# WIN! A PS4 CONSOLE AND A COPY OF **STAR WARS THE FORCE AWAKENS** ON PS4

To celebrate the release of *LEGO® Star Wars™: The Force Awakens™* on PlayStation®4 and PlayStation®3 computer entertainment systems, PlayStation®Vita handheld entertainment system, Xbox One, Xbox 360, the Wii U™ system from Nintendo, the Nintendo 3DS™ family of systems and Windows PC. We're giving you the chance to win a PS4 console and a copy of *LEGO® Star Wars™: The Force Awakens™* on PS4.

*LEGO® Star Wars™: The Force Awakens™* takes players deeper into the new film than any other game with all of the heroic characters from the movie, including Rey, Finn, Poe Dameron, Han Solo, Chewbacca, C-3PO, and BB-8, as well as Kylo Ren, General Hux and Captain Phasma.

This action-packed adventure introduces new gameplay features, including the enhanced 'Multi-Builds' system, which gives players building options to advance the game. Gamers will be able to engage in new Blaster Battles for the first time, utilising surrounding environments to drive back the First Order. Fans can also experience the thrill of high-speed flight gameplay through arena-based battles and dogfights in space, while utilising a multitude of vehicles along the way, including the legendary Millennium Falcon. PlayStation 4 and PlayStation 3 players will have access to exclusive downloadable content, the Droid Character Pack and the Phantom Limb Level Pack.



For a chance to win this brilliant prize, just answer the following question:

**WHO DIRECTED STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS?**

- A) Colin Trevorrow
- B) Gareth Edwards
- C) JJ Abrams



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Season Two

# FROM DUSK TILL DAWN

Snakebites all round

**Details** 18 // 500 mins // **DVD** NETFLIX // Out now **Creator** Robert Rodriguez **Cast** DJ Cotrona, Zane Holtz, Eiza González, Jesse Garcia, Madison Davenport, Wilmer Valderrama, Brandon Soo Hoo **Distributor** Entertainment One



## We were sceptical

when Robert Rodriguez announced that he'd be turning his and Quentin Tarantino's cult movie into a TV series, but the first season of *From Dusk Till Dawn* gradually built into a fun blend of pulpy noir, vampire mythology and gory action. Season Two goes for the same recipe, but ends up struggling from the same issues, with a couple of new ones to boot.

The Gecko brothers have split up following the Titty Twister bloodbath, with newly vamped Richie (Zane Holtz) joining Satanico Pandemonium (Eiza González) on her mission to kill bloodsucking overlord Amancio Malvado (Esai Morales), while Seth (DJ Cotrona) is struggling to get by in Mexico with newly orphaned Kate Fuller (Madison Davenport).

An ancient prophecy involving a blood well will draw them back together, along with conniving vampire Carlos (Wilmer Valderrama) and his new dogsbody Scott Fuller (Brandon Soo Hoo), dogged Texas Ranger Gonzalez (Jesse Garcia), and unstoppable killing machine The Regulator (Danny Trejo).

Although the first season did an admirable job of turning 90 minutes into ten hours, there's rather more wheel-spinning here as Rodriguez and company go entirely off-road.

With most of the characters heading towards the same final destination (even if they don't all know it), keeping them apart means the show drags, despite the frequent outbursts of bloody violence.

So while we get Danny Trejo as a body-part eating badass, we also get more bickering, endless hissing about vengeance and an increasingly convoluted history to go with the Tarantino-y conversations about Kopi Luwak and Iron Fist.

On the plus side, there's still a southern-fried charm to its Texan weirdness, there's plenty of scenery-chewing from veterans like Morales, Jeff Fahey and Jere Burns, and it does deliver on the action and gore fronts.

The final couple of episodes do finally put their foot to the accelerator, and fans of the first season will find enough to keep them invested, but the already-in-production Season Three is going to have to stop coasting if it wants us to come back.

**Jonathan Hatfull**

SciFiNow scored **5** for *From Dusk Till Dawn: Season 2*  
Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

## IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



**Bates Motel**  
Small-town crime plotting swirls with Norman Bates' growing madness in the *Psycho* prequel.



# HOUDINI AND DOYLE

Give up the ghost

**Details** 15 // 450 mins // **DVD** // Out now **Creators** David Hoselton, David Titcher **Cast** Stephen Mangan, Michael Weston, Rebecca Liddiard, Tim McInnerny **Distributor** ITV Studios



**On the turn** of the 20th century, escapologist and illusionist Harry Houdini (Michael Weston) and *Sherlock Holmes* author Arthur

Conan Doyle (Stephen Mangan) team up to solve crimes of a supernatural nature. But don't be deceived by the intriguing concept or fun poster; *Houdini And Doyle* is rarely intriguing or fun.

It's like the whole series is set up to be a debate between Doyle, the believer, and Houdini, the debunker. They can never seem to agree on whether ghosts, vampires and poltergeists exist, even though for ten straight episodes the paranormal aspect to each mystery is never actually paranormal. It seems to have been marketed as a supernatural crime drama, but (spoiler warning) there's nothing remotely supernatural about it. If you've come for ghouls and ghosts then you're going to be disappointed.

The same applies if you're in it for the cast. Between them, Weston and Mangan don't really do much acting. They're not terrible; they just don't seem to react to anything that's going on around them, almost as if they are reading their lines for the first time off a card that's been propped up near the camera.

Occasionally a single tear squeeze its way out during the more emotional scenes, but the two leads often appear bored by the proceedings.

Maybe they're spot on for their characters. Maybe the real Houdini and Doyle didn't experience many emotions themselves. But maybe Mangan and Weston's hearts just weren't really in it. It's hard to get excited about murders when the people investigating them don't seem to give a shit either.

As far as the story in concerned, the mysteries get more and more predictable as it goes along. Things occasionally get exciting, usually with cameos from historical figures like Bram Stoker and Thomas Edison. Scotland Yard's 'first female policeman' Constable Adelaide Stratton (Rebecca Liddiard), who strings along with Houdini and Doyle on their adventures, is also a good addition. But ultimately neither are enough to save the rest of the show.

**Poppy-Jay Palmer**

SciFiNow scored **4** for *Houdini And Doyle*  
Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

## IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



**Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell**  
Two magicians team up in an attempt to bring magic back to England.



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## STAR WARS: REBELLION

Publisher: Fantasy Flight Games // Players: 2-4 // RRP: £84.99

While we've seen a few weak board games based on the *Star Wars* licence, every single offering from Fantasy Flight Games has been stellar. Although *Rebellion* doesn't quite compare with the excellent *Imperial Assault*, it's arguably one of the best galactic wide games we've played so far, even rivalling the excellent *Twilight Imperium* at times.

Of course the most impressive aspect of *Rebellion* is the sheer quality of the included components. At £84.99, *Rebellion* is not cheap by any means, but there is a lot here to justify the high price tag. The cards are of the same stock as similar Fantasy Flight games, and are nice and durable, while the 25 included cardboard leaders are of an equally high standard. The board has great graphics and is extremely sturdy, and the dice are nicely detailed, while the numerous additional tokens will also withstand plenty of wear before they need replacing.

The highlight of the game is easily the miniatures. Each of the 153 included figures are not only exceptionally detailed, but also come in a variety of sizes, from tiny Stormtroopers to a gigantic Super Star Destroyer. Components-wise, *Rebellion* is clearly a match for *Twilight*

*Imperium*, but it's not quite on the same epic scale from a gameplay point of view.

Gameplay is asymmetrical (each side has different objectives) and pits the Rebel Alliance and Empire against each other. The Rebels are vastly outnumbered, and win if the reputation marker and time marker share the same space on the time track. The Empire wins if it finds and conquers the Rebel base, which is easier said than done, as it starts in a new location at the beginning of each new game, and can potentially move to new planets.

Rounds are spread across several key phases. The Assignment phase lets both sides assign leaders to specific missions, which will hopefully give them the edge during play. Play then moves to the Command phase, where each player reveals their chosen missions and start moving units across the galaxy. The Refresh phase is the most complex, allowing players to retrieve Leaders, draw new Mission cards, launch Probe Droids (in an attempt to discover the hidden Rebel base) draw a new objective, advance the Time Marker (which allows for the recruitment of new Leaders or build new units) and finally Deploy Units. It's admittedly complicated at first, but it soon becomes second nature, allowing you to slowly

### 1 DICE

Dice are typically used for combat. The ships use different combination, which in turn affect their attack values.

### 4 MARKERS

There are numerous markers, which are used to show damage, sabotage, loyalty and subjugation.

### 2 ATTACHMENT RINGS

Add to Leaders to show when they've been captured.

### 3 LARGE CARDS

These consist of Mission cards and Objective cards, which are completed when the Rebel player fulfils certain objectives.

### 5 SMALL CARDS

These represent Probe Droids, Action cards (16 Imperial, 18 Rebel) and Tactic cards (15 Ground, 15 Space).



## 6 MINIATURES

The model work is absolutely stunning. There are ground and air forces for both sides, although the Empire wins, with an impressive 89 figures to the Rebels' 64.

## 7 LEADERS

Leaders are incredibly important, and are used to complete secret missions. As the game progresses you can recruit everyone from Luke Skywalker and Han Solo to the fearsome Boba Fett.

expand across the galaxy in search of your opponent's forces.

Although it lacks the intrigue and scope of *Twilight Imperium*, this is a worthy addition to the *Star Wars* board game universe, effortlessly capturing the spirit of the original trilogy while offering massive amounts of replay value. Just be aware that most battles will take a good three hours to complete.

**BEST FOR: FANTASY FLIGHT GAMES**



## 8 BOARD

The large board comes in two parts. It also has useful areas for the Rebel Base, Objective, Probe and Project cards, as well as A Build Queue for each side.

## 9 FACTION SHEETS

These useful cards are filled with information. They feature spaces for Action cards, leaders and stats for your troops.

## TOP FIVE

### MAGIC: THE GATHERING – SHADOWS OVER INNISTRAD



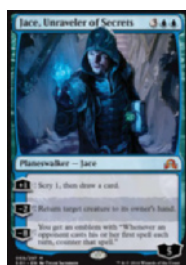
1. ARCHANGEL AVACYN  
£40



2. ARLINN KORD £21



3. SORIN, GRIM  
NEMESIS £20



4. JACE, UNRAVELER  
OF SECRETS £20



5. NAHIRI, THE  
HARBINGER £16

## Carcassonne: Star Wars

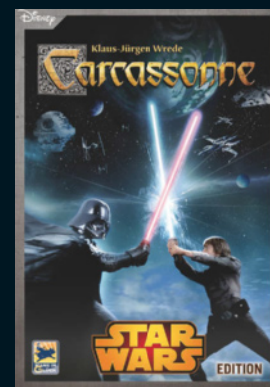
Publisher: Hans Im Gluck // Players: 2-5 // RRP: £24.99

Fear not, this is no poor *Star Wars* cash-in. *Carcassonne: Star Wars* features all the key elements of the classic tile-laying game, but also adds new features that make it stand apart as a worthy alternative to the classic original.

Ostensibly it's still *Carcassonne* at heart, meaning each player takes it in turns to lay tiles (which must connect to each other) in an attempt to score points. Once a tile has been placed, players get the option of placing a meeple, which will garner them points (and be retrieved to use again) once a specific route has been completed. In addition to trade routes, points can also be earned

by exploring asteroid fields or securing planets (done by completely surrounding a planet with other tiles).

The key difference to the original *Carcassonne* is that players can now battle each other at certain points of the game, which certainly makes it feel a lot more cut-throat than before. If multiple players are found in the same realm then they take part in a battle. The skirmishes are relatively simplistic, with dice being rolled for each participating meeple – whoever rolls the highest wins. It's a relatively simple mechanic, but makes for a more aggressive game and ensures the pace never lets up.



While this is an excellent spin on the popular game, the actual components aren't the greatest, with the stickers you have to affix to meeples being relatively poor quality. It's a small niggle however, and shouldn't stop you from adding it to your collection.

**BEST FOR: CASUAL GAMERS**

## DC Dice Masters: World's Finest

Publisher: WizKids Games // Players: 2 // RRP: £16.99

The latest *Dice Master* expansion features some of the most powerful superheroes and villains from the DC universe, including Batman, Superman and Catwoman. Like other versions of *Dice Masters* it's completely standalone, but can be easily integrated into other expansion sets, allowing for all sorts of crazy battles to take place.

Like *Quarriors* (which *Dice Masters* borrows heavily from), the aim of the game is to continually strengthen your team by buying new dice each turn, which will expand both your army and your chance for success during battles.

Each die comes with a corresponding card, and takes the form of either a sidekick die, action

die or character die, of which there are 142 to collect in the set (additional expansions are £0.79 each). The core set, which contains 44 custom dice, does allow two players to battle, but ideally you want an additional pack to ensure a better balanced game.

Although *World's Finest* doesn't really add much to the core game, it features more than enough strong cards to ensure it finds its way into your collection. If you're a fan of DC then a purchase decision becomes that little bit easier.

**BEST FOR: EXPERIENCED GAMERS**



## Expansion Of The Month ZOMBICIDE: WULFSBURG

Publisher: Guillotine Games/Cool Mini Or Not // Players: 2-4 // RRP: £49.99

The first expansion to *Black Plague* is a doozy. It not only introduces four powerful new survivors, but also focuses on a new enemy: zombie wolfzies. Zombie wolfzies are fast, which gives them great advantages over the survivors. They're backed up by wolfbomination, a huge enemy that not only has speed on its side, but is immune to many of the weaker weapons in the game. *Wulfsburg* also features tower tiles, which allow you to control larger areas without fear of retaliation, updated targeting priority, ten powerful new magical items, the ability to cater for up to ten players, as well as a gruelling ten-part campaign. It's expensive, but essential.

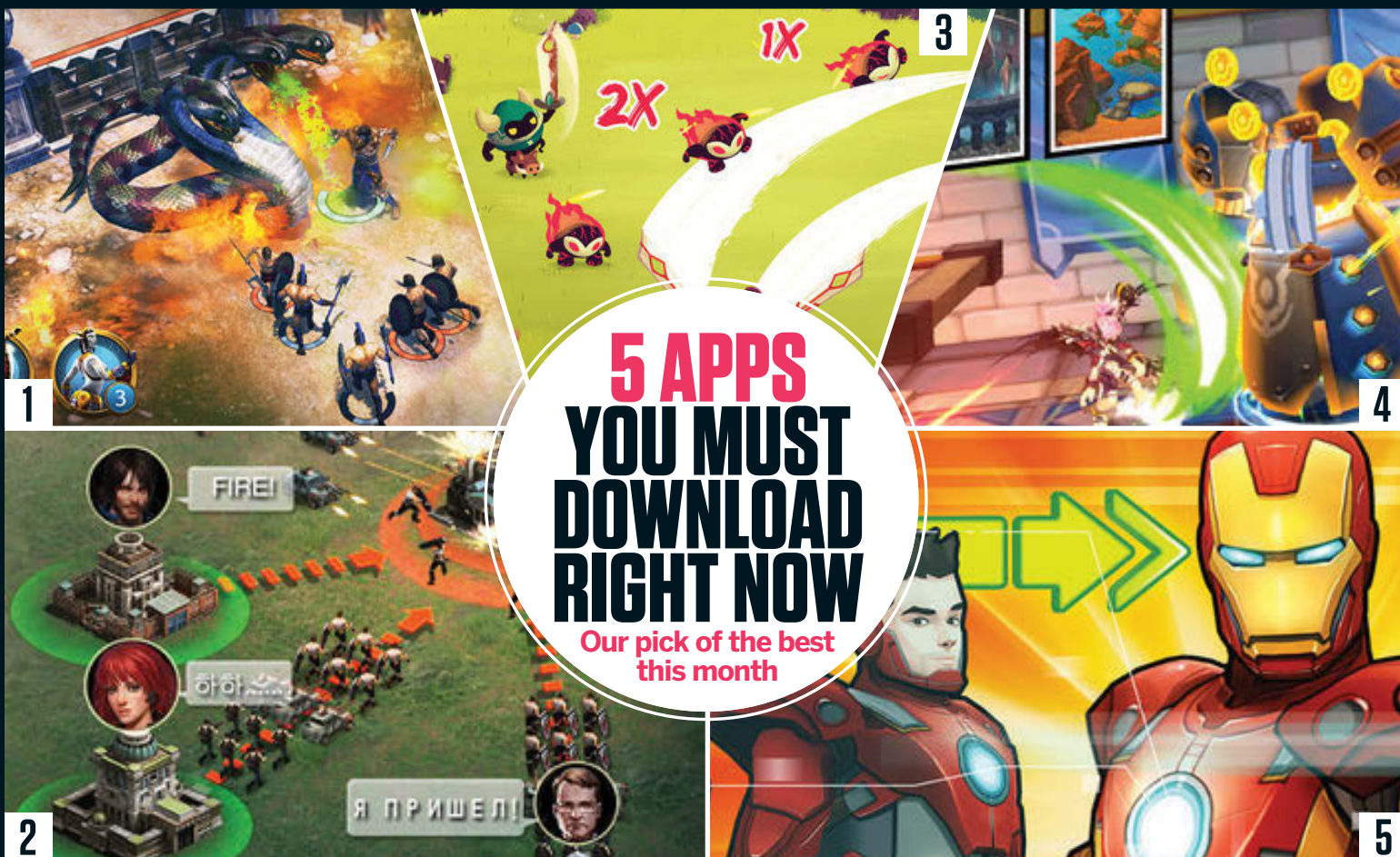


## Do You Remember? DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: DARK SUN

The D&D universe goes apocalyptic. Created by Troy Denning and Timothy B Brown, *Dark Sun* was a refreshingly unique take on D&D thanks to its apocalyptic setting that was a world away from the traditional fantasy settings of past worlds. Magic was incredibly rare, while psionics (mind magic essentially) were plentiful. It featured a large number of new player races, including half-giant, dragonborn and aarakocra, but also delivered a new spin on the more traditional races. Elves were now nomadic loners with nefarious reputations, while Halflings lived in feral cannibalistic tribes. Despite the general harshness of the setting, it proved extremely popular.







## 5 APPS YOU MUST DOWNLOAD RIGHT NOW

Our pick of the best  
this month

### OLYMPUS RISING

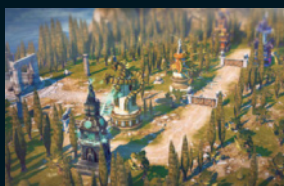
FOR: iOS/ANDROID  
PRICE: FREE



**1** Become the powerful wizard you've always wanted to be with this

stunning MMO from flaregames. Strategy is key as you join the battle for Mount Olympus, build impervious fortresses and keep rival players at bay. Once you get into *Olympus Rising* and reach the rich and layered centre, it becomes difficult to put down. But with beautiful 3D graphics, tailor-made abilities and the power of the gods on your side, why would you want to?

**BEST FOR: MULTIPLAYER LOVERS**



### LAST EMPIRE-WAR Z

FOR: iOS/ANDROID  
PRICE: FREE



**2** The apocalypse isn't always like *The Walking Dead*; sometimes you

have to band together and build an army of friends and allies to take on the hordes heading your way. Get to grips with the zombie apocalypse with this updated version of Long Tech Network Limited's addictive undead-slaying strategy game. *Last Empire-War Z* is basically *The Sims*, but with more death and limbs. Fight to win or fight to survive: the choice is yours.

**BEST FOR: ZOMBIE SLAYERS**



### BUSHIDO BEAR

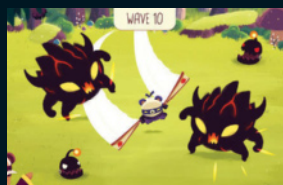
FOR: iOS/ANDROID  
PRICE: FREE



**3** *Bushido Bear* features angry but adorable sword-wielding ninja

bears. That's all you need to know, but for the sake of space, the game's story is revolves around a group of forest bears as they struggle to defend their home against waves of evil demons looking to cause trouble. Play as Smokey Bear, who can teleport anywhere; Neo Bear, who can slow down time, or Lone Cub, a tiny bear that can slip past enemies undetected.

**BEST FOR: BEAR HUGGERS**



### ELSWORD: EVOLUTION

FOR: iOS/ANDROID  
PRICE: FREE



**4** If personalisable RPGs are your thing then this is the app for you. With

literally hundred of levels to complete and master, *Elsword: Evolution* by tsoi you man is brilliant value for money (or no money, as it's free). The fantastic soundtrack and mesmerising 3D graphics let you fully immerse yourself in the complex world, so you can get straight to battling enemies, building your character and style of play, and dominating the global rankings.

**BEST FOR: 3D ENTHUSIASTS**



### MARVEL AVENGERS ACADEMY

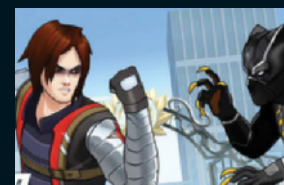
FOR: iOS/ANDROID  
PRICE: FREE



**5** It's not new, but it's just been given a new update with

*Captain America: Civil War*. See Cap and Iron Man go head-to-head once more as your fight your way through levels with an all-star voice cast, including the likes of John Cena, Dave Franco and Alison Brie. But it doesn't stop there; explore the rest of the *Avengers Academy* universe, power-up and butt heads with Red Skull, Madame Hydra and more.

**BEST FOR: MARVEL MAVERICKS**





86 Essential Read

# The Sword Of Shannara



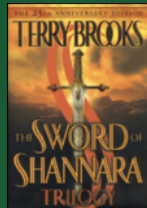
SciFiNow  
**Book Club**

Issue 123's Essential Read:  
Beloved by Toni Morrison

Join in and share your thoughts on  
Twitter or Facebook







## SYNOPSIS

In an inn in the vale there lived an Elf.

Well, a half-Elf, but he isn't yet aware of his heritage. Shea Ohmsford has lived

unaware that what he believes to be his family is not his own – even Flick, the brother to whom he feels such affinity. And that revelation arrives with several more, all delivered by a Druid: Allanon, the last of his kind.

Not only is Shea not an Ohmsford; he's the last in the bloodline of an Elven king, Jerle Shannara. And not only is he the descendant of an Elven king; Shea is the only person alive who can wield Jerle's legendary sword. And not only does Shea get a cool sword, but he has to use that sword to save his home and much more besides from the Warlock Lord, a powerful fallen Druid who instigated a cataclysmic war centuries before.

Frankly, it all sounded great until that last bit, and before too long Shea and Flick are running for their lives, pursued by the Warlock Lord's dark forces. A journey begins that will change Shea, and the world, forever.







# Essential read: The Sword Of Shannara

Terry Brooks' debut novel was a massive hit on its release, but comparisons to Tolkien were never far behind WORDS MATTHEW HANDRAHAN

**In the pre-internet world, good news spread slowly. There were fewer screens, fewer channels, no 24-hour news, and nobody had even heard the term 'home computer'. The ascent of any cultural figure could take years, regardless of how brilliant their work might be. Recommendations were passed by word of mouth, based on the content of printed pages and fleeting broadcasts.**

That even applied to the immortals. Though it's hard to imagine a world in which Tolkien is a niche figure, it took a long time for his writing to travel beyond the UK. If an American had read *The Lord Of The Rings* before the late Sixties then they were certainly one of the few, and though his renown would escalate rapidly in the decade that followed, the same wasn't true for the fantasy genre – as far as publishers were concerned, Tolkien sold, but fantasy did not.

This changed at the end of the Seventies, when a flourish of new fantasy writers emerged, many of them inspired by a trilogy of books they encountered a decade before. Terry Brooks' *The Sword Of Shannara* was published in that environment, awaited by critics who seized upon the similarities to Tolkien's trilogy. "The suggestive tedium of the rewrite has set in, for a sameness clings to these novels just as surely as Frodo clung to his silly ring," the *Village Voice* said in its appraisal of Brooks and his peers. "It is one thing for scholarly Tolkien to rewrite Celtic/Nordic myth; it is quite another to rewrite Tolkien."

And Brooks' publisher did little to dispel that idea. Lester del Rey was

fantasy editor at Ballantine Books, which had published *The Lord Of The Rings* in the US. Speaking on the *Geek's Guide To The Galaxy* podcast, Brooks said, "When it came to the business end of things, there wasn't anybody smarter [than del Rey and his wife, Judy-Lynn]. They knew exactly what they were doing and how to do it."

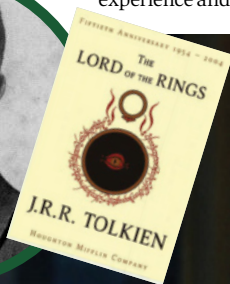
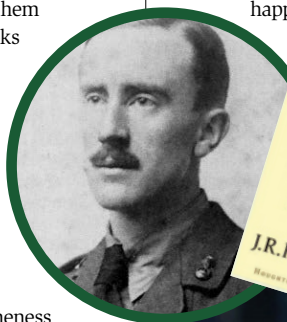
Lester del Rey wanted another Tolkien to sell to the market; he wanted a bestseller, and he believed he had found that in *The Sword Of Shannara*. For the final version, Greg and Tim Hildebrandt were brought in to add artwork and illustrations, just as they had been for *The Lord Of The Rings*. There was even a direct appeal to Tolkien fans printed on the cover. As the *Sydney Morning Herald* noticed when the novel was published in Australia, "The cover addresses, 'all those who have been seeking something to read since they finished *The Lord Of The Rings*.'"

Brooks, who had never had a novel published before, allowed the process to happen, recognising del Rey's experience and editing

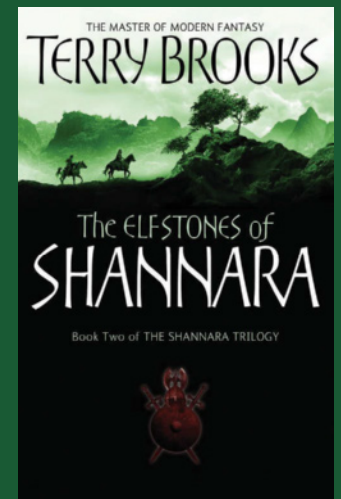
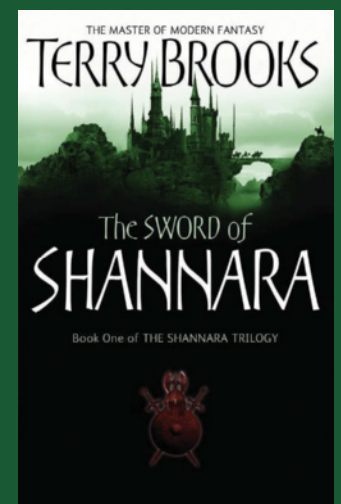
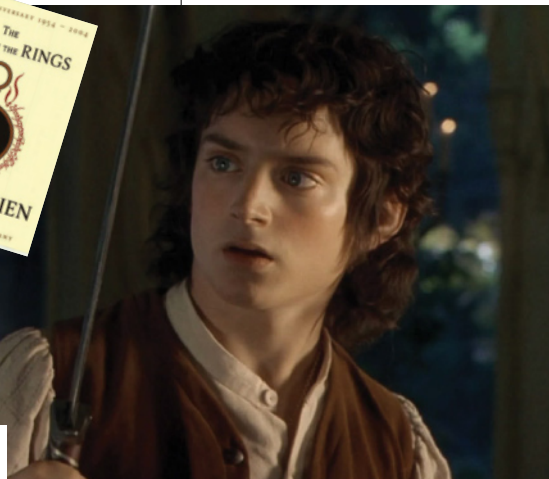
skills as probably the best possible teachers for an inexperienced writer – a writer with a limited experience of fantasy. When he was growing up in the late Forties and Fifties, science fiction was all anybody read, and he took enormous pleasure from European adventure writers like Alexandre Dumas and Robert Louis Stevenson.

He started writing stories down at ten years old, but his experiments with genre never included fantasy. Then, in his early 20s, his girlfriend gave him a copy of *The Lord Of The Rings* as a present. "It was a life-transforming experience," he recalled. Within a few years he had started *The Sword Of Shannara*.

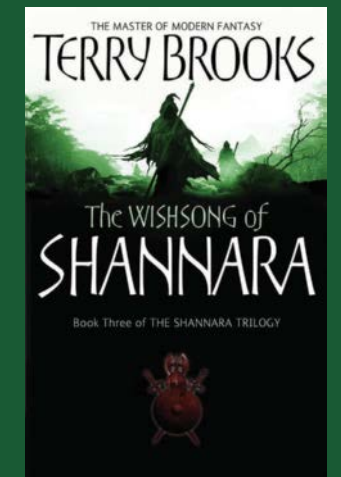
Brooks' reflections on that time make it clear that he now believes the process of knocking his submitted manuscript into shape did more to guide his future than finishing the book in the first place. Having already completed three drafts before showing del Rey, he was told to rewrite chunks of it multiple times, including the ending. "I never knew it was possible to rewrite so much prose and not go insane," Brooks told *Geek's*



Comparisons with JRR Tolkien's *The Lord Of The Rings* were inevitable.



**"I NEVER KNEW IT WAS POSSIBLE TO REWRITE SO MUCH AND NOT GO INSANE"**  
TERRY BROOKS





## Your Take On The Classic

WHAT YOU THOUGHT  
@SCIFINOW



"Lord Of The Rings for a new generation, and it didn't work in my opinion. Read the *Word & Void* trilogy instead."

@HanClanSolo77



"One of my all time favourites. Fun and exciting. I love the whole series of books. Brooks is easily one of my favourite authors."

@JuniperJennie



"I have read it but cannot really remember it... not much of a lasting impact compared to other books but still an enjoyable read."

@thegingersquirt



"LOTR lite...I lost interest after the *Toaster Of Shannara*..."

@kneeldowne



"Got me so hooked I read the whole series. Owes a clear debt to LOTR but stands proudly on its own."

#EpicFantasy @julesy\_uk



"I read it many years ago when I'd ran out of Tolkien. The post-apocalyptic setting for a fantasy novel was intriguing."

@davidmckeown28



"Having read most of them from the start, would like to see him writing something else. Enjoyed it but bored now."

@kath\_brentford



"I thought *Sword Of Shannara* was one of the most derivative, childish and poorly written books I have ever read. Utterly abysmal."

@TimMcNulty



"Very much of its time. Dreadful sub-Tolkien knock-off with cardboard characters and an unoriginal derivative plot. Sorry!"

#BookClub @HarryPigg



"Still have my 1978 pb back illustrated by The Brothers Hildebrandt! Loved the story, but disappointed in the ending."

#bookclub @indianamulder



"The *Sword Of Shannara* series is my favourite. He's really an amazing fantasy author. I've read all his books :)"

@LadySensei89

What do you think? Let us know on Twitter or Facebook



MTV adapted sequel *The Elfstones Of Shannara* for a TV series.

## "TOLKIEN'S A SCHOLAR, AND I WASN'T A SCHOLAR... I WANTED TO WRITE THE THREE MUSKETEERS IN TOLKIEN'S WORLD"

TERRY BROOKS

*Guide To The Galaxy*. "But I learned how to be a professional in the process."

"And he told me that I was going to take it on the chin over this from many, many sides, that people were going to hate it, that people were going to say it was a rip-off... And I said, 'I don't care. I want to get my foot in the door and figure out how I can do this for a living.' Because that's what I wanted to do: I wanted to be a writer, and I had no clue how to go about doing it."

Indeed, when Brooks finally encountered *The Lord Of The Rings*, he was less taken with the details – of which there were enough to make the head spin – than the structure of the narrative. Speaking to *The Author Hour*, he described the moment as if he'd finally discovered the answer to the question of what kind of author he wanted to be: "I thought, 'Here's the format for an adventure story.'"

However, the opposite was also true. Anyone who has read *The Sword Of Shannara* will have noticed that Brooks uses Tolkien's narrative as a template for his own, but the academic precision with which Middle-Earth and its myriad languages and histories and peoples were constructed was less appealing.

"I didn't like all those appendices," he told *Strange Horizons*. "I liked the central storyline, minus a bunch of the stuff that slowed it down. Because, you know, Tolkien's a scholar, and I wasn't a scholar... I didn't do any of that stuff. I wanted to write *Three Musketeers* in Tolkien's world."

Tolkien wrote those stories as a way of demonstrating his lore and

languages. Brooks wanted to discover his own lore through the stories. He didn't want to stop at an isolated trilogy, but to piece together the world that lay beyond it through books about new characters living in different times. The inspiration behind that notion wasn't even a fantasy author; it was William Faulkner, who Brooks had studied extensively at university.

"Really, William Faulkner impacted me more than Tolkien," he said to *Strange Horizons*. "Not many people think that's true, but it is. I took all of his ideas about Yoknapatawpha County and the ways in which families destroy each other by keeping secrets, and the ways in which they betray each other, and their struggles to find a place in the world where they have betrayed others in the families, and generational sagas – that's all Faulkner. Every bit of it."

That influence would become more apparent with time, as Brooks became more comfortable with the mechanics of writing and refined his authorial voice. In *The Sword Of Shannara* specifically, though, the claim that Faulkner casts a longer shadow than Tolkien is debatable. What it displays is a talented writer learning his craft, applying a new sensibility to a framework that obscured its unique qualities. If you read the other two novels in Brooks' trilogy, *The Elfstones Of Shannara* and *The Wishsong Of Shannara*, you will see that first-hand.

"I've really gotten a long way away from Tolkien these days, and not very many people come up to me anymore and say, 'Well gee, you're writing an

awful lot like Tolkien,'" he told *The Author Hour*.

If the comparisons to one literary titan dissipated with time, they emerged again with the announcement of MTV's intentions to adapt *Shannara* for television – and they returned with a different focus. A TV show had the potential to allow Brooks to gain still more renown in his own right, but the critics immediately leapt on a comparison to one of the biggest fantasy properties since *The Lord Of The Rings*.

"Don't mention *Game Of Thrones* to me," he said in an interview with *EW*. "We don't want to go that route. That's not what the *Shannara* books are." But it didn't take long for those charged with making the show to emphasise the unrequited love, love triangles, slight







Allanon – a character in *The Sword Of Shannara* – reappeared for *Elfstones*.

jealousy and messiness of love that existed in the books.

Brooks' biggest fans might well disagree with that appraisal, just as they disagreed with the way sex and sexuality were handled when *The Shannara Chronicles* started airing earlier this year. Just as Brooks was packaged as a new Tolkien, he's now the market-friendly corollary of George RR Martin at the start of his career in TV.

"I don't much like a lot of what is being written these days. I think it is way too dark and nihilistic," he said in an interview with *Grasping For The Wind*. "I don't get off on graphic sex and a lot of four-letter words. I don't like it when everyone dies at the end. I hate it when there is nothing positive and hopeful in a book. I know it sells, and I don't fault people who write it, but it is not for me. I will always write the same kind of story. People struggle, they persevere, there is a cost to their efforts, but in the end things work out. That's just who I am."



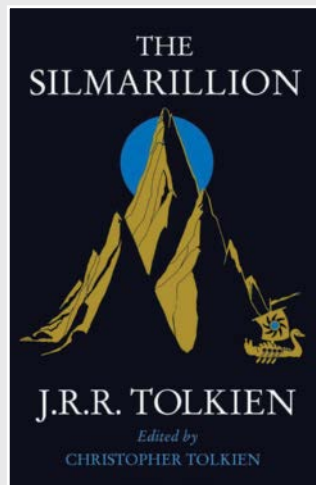
Brooks is keen to distance his books from *A Song Of Ice And Fire*.

# Where Have I Seen This Before?

YOU RANG, M'LORD?

## WILLIAM FAULKNER ▶

You really can't read *The Sword Of Shannara* without thinking of *LOTR*, and that was partly the intention of a young author attempting his first major novel. However, there is another big influence on Brooks' writing, albeit a relatively well-disguised one: William Faulkner, the Nobel-winning author who set all but three of his novels in the fictional Yoknapatawpha County.

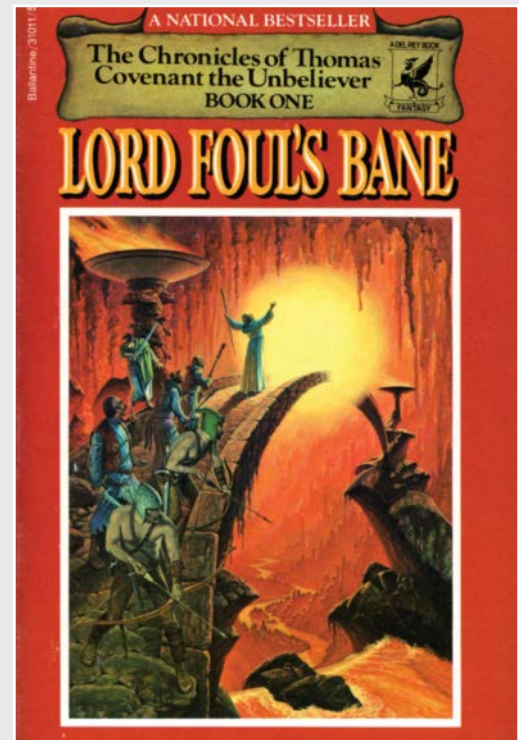


## ◀ THE SILMARILLION

*Shannara* shares a few qualities with *The Lord Of The Rings*, but you'll understand more about fantasy literature by immersing yourself in the differences. *The Silmarillion*, a collection of Tolkien's mythopoeic writings, highlights the academic rigour he applied to the creation of Middle-Earth. Brooks admired more than loved this aspect of Tolkien's work.

## STAR WARS EPISODE I: THE PHANTOM MENACE ▶

Given the ludicrous degree of hype ahead of the return of the *Star Wars* franchise, there's a solid chance you either bought Terry Brooks' novelisation, or nagged a parent to buy it for you. Frankly, it's a lot better than the movie, with George Lucas giving Brooks freedom to fill in the holes in the plot.



## THE CHRONICLES OF THOMAS COVENANT ▲

*The Fellowship Of The Ring* was published in 1954, more than a decade before the trilogy gathered pace in the US. Stephen R Donaldson was born within three years of Brooks, and his first fantasy novel was published in the same year as *The Sword Of Shannara*. The fact that critics noted both books for their similarities to Tolkien's work should come as no surprise.



## ◀ RUNNING WITH THE DEMON

Brooks conceived of *Shannara* as the first part of a larger chronology. But his most substantial series outside of that universe, the *Word & Void* trilogy, was also swallowed up. Brooks claims the link naturally arose from the direction of the story. He also calls the first instalment, *Running With The Demon*, "as good a book as I can write."

## THE SHANNARA CHRONICLES ▶

Brooks had been fielding questions about a screen adaptation for at least a decade before it finally came to fruition. Initially, it was considered for a film series, but MTV grasped the nettle and elected to focus on the second novel, *The Elfstones Of Shannara*, as the basis for a TV show. The first season ended recently, drawing comparisons to *Game Of Thrones*.





Which sub-genre  
would you like to  
see tackled next?

Let us know on Twitter  
or Facebook



Tolkien's *Lord Of The Rings* trilogy was made into a popular film series starring Elijah Wood as Frodo Baggins.

## Epic fantasy themes

Things to look out for...

### Race



Whether it's humans fighting battles against other sub-species of humans or elves betraying an army of dwarf allies, the different races of the fantasy world just can't seem to get along. At least Legolas and Gimli found it in themselves to fight their in-built prejudice.

### War



An epic fantasy novel wouldn't be an epic fantasy novel without some kind of conflict. Usually the go-to conflicts end up being all-out wars. The fights in make-believe worlds always seem to be a lot bigger and more dramatic than those from other genres.

### Religion



Epic fantasy often takes inspiration from religion, whether it be a real life one or one made up specifically for the people of a magical kingdom. The religious aspect to any story may also end up being the thing that blurs the lines between good and evil.

### Sorcery



No matter the setting, scale or timeframe, there's almost always an all-powerful sorcerer with a beard, staff and long robes knocking about somewhere, looking to get in on the action. Their unstoppable magical tricks are also almost always what ends up saving the day.

## A Beginner's Guide To

# Epic fantasy

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

Get to grips with  
the world of magic  
and dragons

**R**ecently, it has seemed as though shows like *Game Of Thrones*, *True Blood* and *The Vampire Diaries* have played a big part in bringing fantasy back into fashion. But the truth is that it never really went out of fashion. It may not be the epitome of cool, but it's mighty addictive.

Readers and viewers alike have always been looking to get their fantasy fix, and for good reason; it's quite simply good, old-fashioned escapism. Why read about things that have happened and things that *might* happen when you could be immersing yourself in worlds of dragons, magic and sorcery?

One particular branch of the genre that people can't get enough of is epic fantasy. The thing that elevates it above the realm of just plain old fantasy is down to the scale of the story. Epic fantasies are just bigger in every sense of the word.

Some sagas focus on world building and are set in alternative, fictional locations like Westeros (*A Song Of Ice And Fire*), the Four Lands (the original *Shannara Trilogy*) or Middle-Earth (*The Lord Of The Rings*),

as opposed to a place grounded in reality. Many worlds borrow from the past, but some are based on visions of the future. A few don't resemble anything on Earth.

Other stories place an emphasis on character and culture. Many epic fantasies are told from the viewpoint of one main protagonist, but other beings they encounter

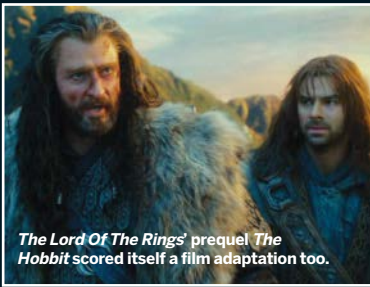
and their interactions with them contribute to creating a wider and more complex world.

But fantasy doesn't need dragons, orcs and gratuitous nudity to be considered an epic one; it just needs to be magical and, most importantly, massive. But what connects almost all ventures into the genre is total immersion and imagination.

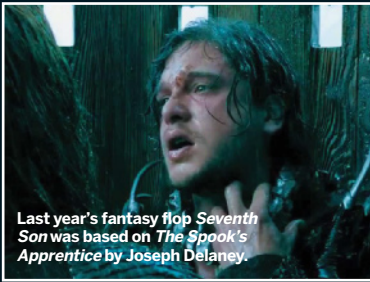


HBO's *Game Of Thrones* played a big part in bringing epic fantasy back to TV.





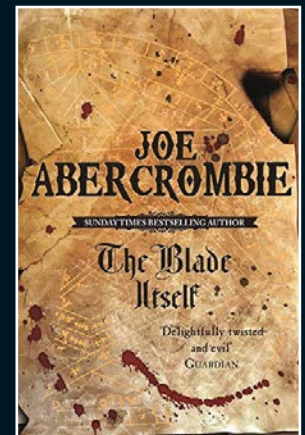
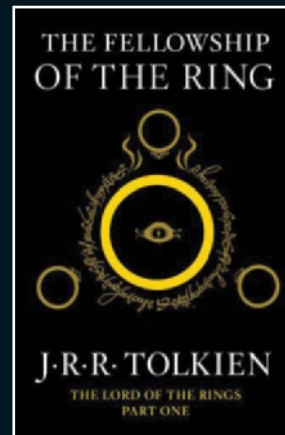
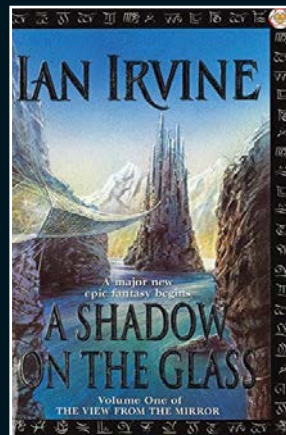
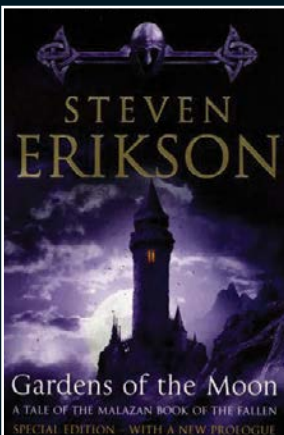
The Lord Of The Rings' prequel *The Hobbit* scored itself a film adaptation too.



Last year's fantasy flop *Seventh Son* was based on *The Spook's Apprentice* by Joseph Delaney.



Terry Brooks' *The Elfstones Of Shannara* was recently made into a hit MTV series, *The Shannara Chronicles*.



## In a world...

War! What is it good for?

**GARDENS OF THE MOON**  
Author: Steven Erikson  
Publisher: Bantam  
Published: 1998  
Price: £8.99

As the first of ten volumes in Steven Erikson's *Malazan Book Of The Fallen* series, *Gardens Of The Moon* is a great starting point to see if you fancy committing

yourself to the next nine books. It's also a great introduction to the genre, because little else gets more epic fantasy-ish than this. Jam-packed with warfare, bloodshed and otherworldly races, Erikson stretches the *Malazan* world almost to its breaking point, but in the very best way.

“Awesome – I didn't know that was going on but the story just sucked me in and I couldn't put the book down until it was over.” @DukePhilipG

## Magic and mayhem

Get your fix in paperback

**A GAME OF THRONES**  
Author: George R.R. Martin  
Publisher: Harper Voyager  
Published: 1996  
Price: £9.99

If you're an epic fantasy fan and are yet to delve into Westeros, we suggest you re-evaluate your priorities. But for people looking to get into the genre, George R.R. Martin's *A Song Of Ice And Fire* series is a great start. If you enjoy the HBO show then you'll probably like the books that inspired it. However, with five books and thousands of pages to get through, the written series can seem a little daunting. And it isn't over yet, with two more books left to come!

“The book changed my life. Most important book I've ever read as a writer.” @john\_zeleznik

## Mirror image

Self reflection

**A SHADOW ON THE GLASS**  
Author: Ian Irvine  
Publisher: Orbit  
Published: 1998  
Price: £12.99

As the first book in the *View From The Mirror* quartet, *A Shadow On The Glass* does a brilliant job of setting up Australian novelist Ian Irvine's rich fantastical worlds. The three worlds of Aachan, Santhenar and Tallallame form the basis for a detailed study of race and politics, told through the medium of epic fantasy. Irvine weaves a tale quite unlike any other as he explores the lives of Llian and Karen, the fight between good and evil and the struggle for survival.

“One of my fav epic fantasies, & the first I ever read.” @SarahKarenne

## Down to Middle-Earth

Put the one ring on it

**THE LORD OF THE RINGS TRILOGY**  
Author: J.R.R. Tolkien  
Publisher: HarperCollins  
Published: 1954-1955  
Price: £8.99

No epic fantasy list would be complete without this magical trilogy. The story starts with *The Fellowship Of The Rings* and an elderly hobbit named Bilbo Baggins. After his eleventy-first birthday, Bilbo decides to retire from his hometown of the Shire, and in doing so accidentally sends his nephew Frodo off on an epic quest across Middle-Earth with three more hobbits, a wizard, two men, an elf and a dwarf, all to dispose of the all-powerful One Ring.

“Tolkien changed modern fiction.” @Siegel\_Jan

## Magic and politics

Character-driven epic

**THE FIRST LAW TRILOGY**  
Author: Joe Abercrombie  
Publisher: Gollancz  
Published: 2006-present  
Price: £9.99

Abercrombie's *First Law* trilogy is a great series to get your epic fantasy bearings with, but it's also one to steer clear of if you often find yourself particularly sensitive to violence and, ahem, *adult language*. The first book in the saga, *The Blade Itself*, follows a range of colourful characters, including crippled torturer Inquisitor Glokta, dashing nobleman Captain Jezal dan Luthar, infamous warrior Logen Ninefingers and short-tempered First of the Magi/possible fraud Bayaz.

“Great story! Everyone are SOBs and would-be murderers.” @spacebob563



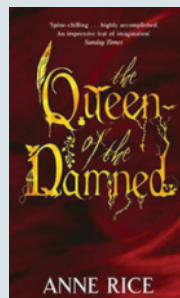
## Your Five Best vampire novels

CHOOSE YOUR TOP FIVE  
@SCIFINOW ON TWITTER



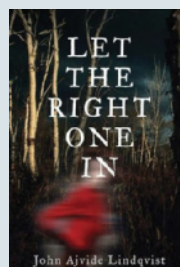
### 1. Salem's Lot

"Salem's Lot. Never bettered. #BookClub" @Zardo67



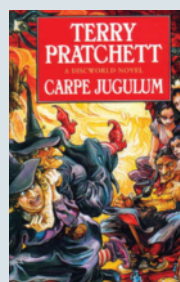
### 2. Queen of the Damned

"Queen Of The Damned by Anne Rice, because she goes back to the start of her vampire mythology and then back to her present." @Cascararogue



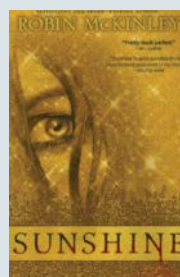
### 3. Let The Right One In

"Let The Right One In. Simply a beautiful combination of setting, characters, and story. #BookClub" @Rozza1210



### 4. Carpe Jugulum

"Dracula by Stoker, A Quick Bite by Sands, Death Masks by Butcher & Carpe Jugulum by Pratchett." @The\_LizMarshall



### 5. Sunshine

"Sunshine by @robinmckinley because it's so uniquely its own thing & unlike other vampire novels, with a great cast of characters." @Cfpercy

**Details** Author: Kiersten White Publisher: Corgi Children's Price: £7.99 Released: 7 July

# AND I DARKEN

Dracula untold

**Despite his impressive** and brutal reign over the kingdom of Wallachia in the 15th century, Vlad Tepes is best known today as the inspiration for Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. And now, thanks to Kiersten White, he has just been given another fictional makeover.

*And I Darken* is based on the infamous Impaler's early life, but it's not a straight retelling of historical events. Instead, Vlad has been transformed into Lada, the eldest daughter of the house of Draculesti. Just like the real-life Vlad, Lada finds herself used as a political pawn, handed off to an Ottoman sultan to secure peace between Wallachia and

the Ottoman state. And like the real-life Vlad, it makes her furious. But as a girl, her options for fighting back seem limited. Lada, though, isn't one to take no for an answer.

The story is told from two perspectives: Lada's, and her younger brother Radu's. Where she's fierce, he's kind; where she's rude, he's polite; and where she charges into any given situation, dagger drawn and teeth bared, he hangs back, making friends and building alliances. White uses both siblings to paint a vivid portrait of a complex political situation, and an even more evocative

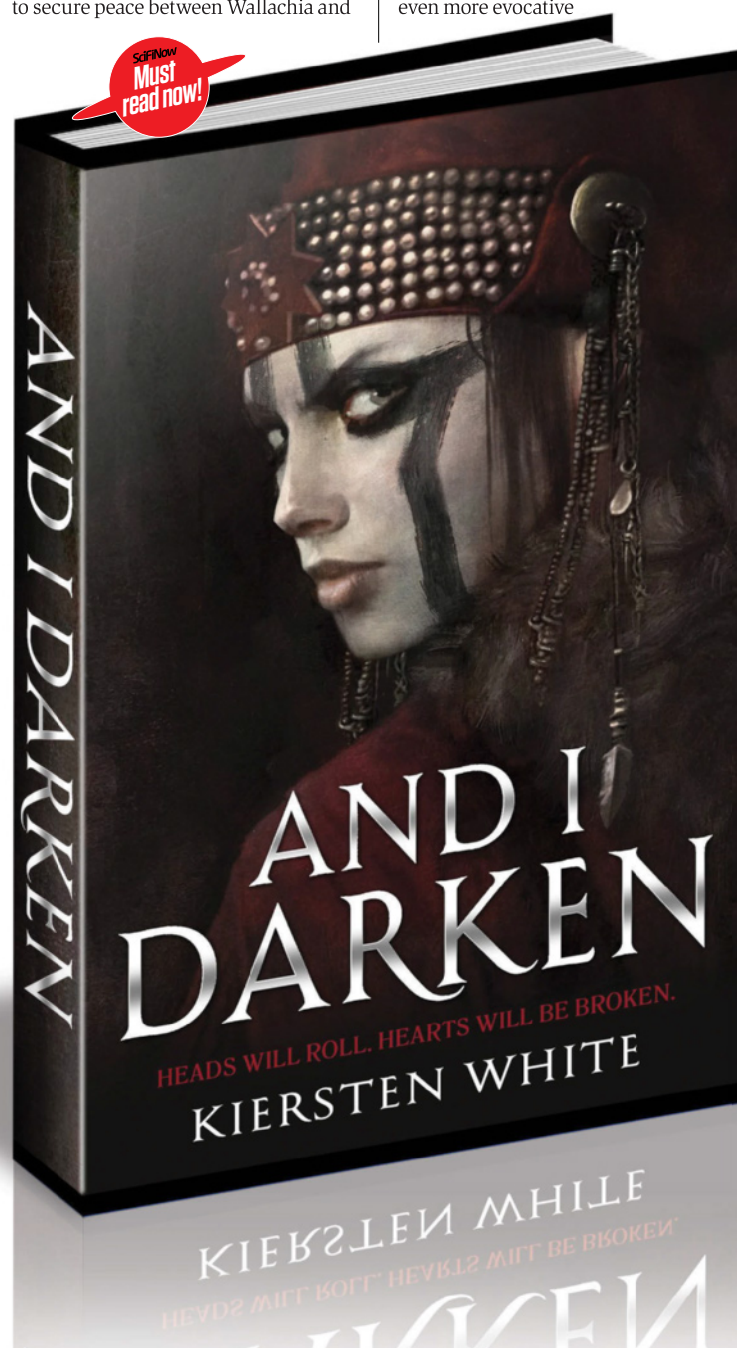
portrait of forbidden love. The third major player in their story is Mehmed, son of the sultan and the object of desire for both Lada and Radu. So yes, like so many other YA novels there's a love triangle in here, but at least it's not about a girl struggling to choose between two different boys; it's more painful than that, and far more dangerous.

Every chapter seems to bring a new threat for Lada and Radu, and as they grow older the threats just get bigger. Allegiances shift and shatter, and nowhere is ever really safe, as the children of nobility are only ever useful for one of two things: getting killed or being married off. Lada and Radu aren't keen on either option, and their efforts to build their own independent futures are compelling. Despite being set in the distant past, spanning more than a decade and incorporating several different countries, religions and social hierarchies, there is never a dull moment in this book. There's just enough history to make sense of the various conflicts, just enough action to keep things moving, and more than enough angst to make it all relatable.

And while Vlad probably wouldn't recognise himself in these pages, his shadow hangs heavy over everything that happens. Because even if the reader doesn't know exactly what happened when the real Mehmed marched against Constantinople, even the least historically inclined among us knows the Impaler didn't get married and settle down to live happily ever after.

Lada's path, then, leads inevitably towards violence, and that knowledge lends this – the first of a trilogy – an extra edge. It's sad, but also thrilling (in a macabre sort of way) to watch as an underestimated princess carves herself into a figure of fear. By the end of this book, it's doubtful that even the vampiric Dracula would have stood a chance against her.

**Sarah Dobbs**



SciFiNow scored **9** for **And I Darken**  
Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**  
**A Game Of Thrones**  
George RR Martin  
The first *Song Of Ice And Fire* book features more political intrigue than you can shake a sword at.





**Details** Author: Sam Munson Publisher: Atom Books Price: £7.99 Released: Out now

# THE WAR AGAINST THE ASSHOLES

## Harry Potter and the Vulgar Theurgist

It's "brazen arrogant prose", protagonist Michael Wood exclaims as he flips through card-trick manual *The Calendar Of Sleights*. Secretly a test for budding magicians, *The Calendar* leads Michael into a new magical world where factions of



theurgists are at war with one another. All the while, we get to read Michael's own, what seems to be unironically, shamelessly foul-mouthed brazen and arrogant first-person narrative.

While there is a lot at stake for Michael and his friends in this war, it's difficult to empathise with any of them or care when something bad happens due to a lack of synergy between the group.

Plus, the magical powers aren't clear cut, and it's difficult to tell how powerful anyone is, if at all – if a character can trap an enemy in a mirror, then can't they later protect themselves with their magic?

It's no *Harry Potter*, where it's more obvious where character's limits are, even if some elements are borrowed from the popular series – like a magic know-it-all map.

Michael's egotistical outlook is convincing, but his pedantic need to explain where he learned more complicated words is patronising, even for a younger audience.

Author Sam Munson *does* mirror the overconfident teenager's mindset well, to the point where it's easy to imagine Michael's exact thinking voice for each and every sentence. But because of this style, the structure of Munson's sentences never changes, and it creates a tiresome, disjointed read, especially during action sequences. It's easy – yet at the same time difficult – to read.

What you read is what you get, making *The War Against The Assholes* not especially complex. The simplicity of it all makes Munson's fantastical world all the more elaborate, it's just that paragraphs can often leave you breathless – and not in a good way.

**Carrie Mok**

SciFiNow scored 2 for  
The War Against The Assholes  
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



### IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

**Fated**  
**Benedict Jacka**  
Alex Verus has the gift of foresight, but can he foresee the results from cracking open an ancient relic in a mage war?

## YOUR READS

### What you lot have been reading this month



@tadethompson's  
*Making Wolf*. It's superb.  
#BookClub  
@FoxSpiritBooks



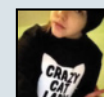
"The Fireman by Joe Hill.  
So far so good!  
@IFLHorror



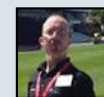
"Just finished *Birdbox*  
by Josh Malerman,  
absolutely brilliant.  
Couldn't put it down!!  
#BookClub  
@SB\_Murray



"Almost halfway through  
*Consumed*, the first  
novel from body horror  
film legend Cronenberg.  
Psychosexual thriller chills  
so far. #BookClub  
@ParsonsFiction



"I read *The Humans* by  
@matthaig1 Brilliant! A  
great look at humanity.  
#BookClub  
@thegingersquirt



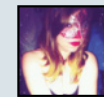
"I'm reading Terry Brooks'  
*Shannara Trilogy* again.  
I don't really know if I'm  
enjoying it again tbh lol...  
#BookClub  
@ajbridgewater



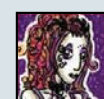
"Reading *Reliquary*  
by Douglas Preston &  
Lincoln Child. Wonderfully  
creeped out by this  
terrific monster thriller!  
#BookClub  
@dreamerdreamson



"Sweetheart, Sweetheart  
by Bernard Taylor. So far,  
so good. #BookClub  
@just\_whitehead



"Just finished  
@bbeaulieu's *Twelve  
Kings*, I really enjoyed this  
impressive intricately  
written story and  
can't wait for the next.  
#BookClub  
@Cascararogue



"Right now I am about  
halfway through *The  
Princess Bride* (which I  
have never read before!)  
and it's just as good as I'd  
hoped. #BookClub  
@maetria

Tell us what you're reading  
on Twitter or Facebook

Author: Paul Krueger Publisher: Quirk Books Price: £11.99 Released: Out now

# LAST CALL AT THE NIGHTSHADE LOUNGE

**Finding a job** after graduation can be tricky, which is how Bailey Chen ends up as a bar-back in one of Chicago's many drinking holes and living with her parents.

When she accidentally mixes a cocktail that possesses magical properties, she finds that there's more to making drinks than getting punters drunk: you're supposed to protect them from monsters that prey on them.

Krueger's debut has an instant charm to it, with an immensely likeable lead and a good blend of urban fantasy and millennial anguish. Bailey's struggle to chase the adulthood she actually wants is relatable, so when she realises that there's a world in which she can make a difference, we share her excitement.

The author confidently develops this kingdom of cocktail-making warlocks with a collection of well-rounded characters and drinks recipes that double as history lessons. Bailey's fellow bartenders are great fun, and the ties between the city's bar-owners give the novel some weight and threat.

As funny as the bickering between the heroes is and as engaging as Bailey's sudden interest in the guy she turned down at college is, *Last Call At The Nightshade Lounge* really connects when it focuses on Bailey's search for something she's good at and to stake her claim to it.

It's a fast and funny read, but you'll genuinely care about the outcome. Also, you'll really, really want a cocktail when you're finished.  
**Jonathan Hatfull**



SciFiNow scored 8 for  
Last Call at the  
Nightshade Lounge  
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



### IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

**The Unnoticeables**  
**Robert Brockway**  
A Seventies punk and a present-day stuntwoman collide with the forces of darkness in this twisted tale.





60 SECONDS WITH

## John L Clemmer



**How would you pitch *The Way Of The Dhin* to a reader?**

What if we could break some of the laws of physics, but didn't understand how that

worked? Someone just brought us some tools – the kit that let us do it? And to complicate matters further, they couldn't communicate how it worked to us or why they'd given us the tools?

This scenario is set in a near future, where AI technology escalated right past the level of, say, Watson and Siri's great-grandchildren, the Singularity. All sorts of things are managed for us, but suddenly we're perhaps not entirely in control anymore and maybe aren't comfortable with that.

The story is the intersection of those two plot lines. Read it; you'll like it.

**What inspired you to write the novel?**

I discovered an author I loved (Iain M Banks) had died. Talking with a friend about that, I said "I should write a book. I'm going to write my own." That, and some encounters with truly terrible self-published work out there.

"Wow. I could do better than that." Okay, then prove it.

**How important was the science part of the science-fiction balance to you?**

More important than it might appear to a casual reader. When one of the characters casually remarks that they're going a certain speed and headed for a particular location, I did the calculations for how much time that would take, for example. There's a lot of solid science tucked in there that defined how things play out.

**What advice would you give to a first-time author embarking on a sci-fi story?**

Write. All the time you're spending reading about writing, chatting about writing online, 'preparing' and so forth isn't getting you any closer to your goal, no matter how much you rationalise it.

Write. You'll discover where you need to improve once you actually have something written.

*The Way Of The Dhin* by John L Clemmer is available now on Amazon. Read more at [www.thewayofthedhin.com](http://www.thewayofthedhin.com).



**Details** Author: Ren Warom Publisher: Titan Books Price: £7.99 Released: Out now

## ESCAPOLOGY World in motion

**Escapology** is a complex, twisting cyberpunk thriller. The two main characters, hacker-type Shock Pao and assassin Amiga, live in Foon Gung, one of the last remaining cities on post-apocalyptic Earth. Each on their own mission, their paths inevitably cross, throwing dangerous crime lords, massive ships made of floating pieces of land and all-powerful AI overlords into the mix.

Written by Ren Warom, an imaginative and talented author, *Escapology* is a wild ride, sometimes bordering on derailment. Foon Gung's *Blade Runner*-esque aesthetics clash with fantastical landscapes, whose scale also seem inconsistent.

The action, likewise, is frantic and breathless, most impressive in Shock's dreamlike 'Haunting' through the Slip – a virtual world where AI rules supreme and dangerous secrets are hidden – and in Amiga's tangibly

tense stealth missions. However, most others seem to serve a mere functional role, and Amiga and Shock's respective internal monologues feel too similar in style to each other for such vastly different people.

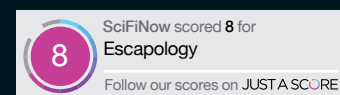
As a genre thriller, *Escapology* struggles as much as it succeeds, the scattershot style hindering the story at times. However, looking deeper, the novel takes on a more profound form. From the transgender Shock's desperate search for an identity, a home, a way to fit in, and Amiga's constant surprise at her own feelings of detachment, to the real oppression of everyone else's needs imposed on our main characters, *Escapology* excels as a subjective study of anxiety, depression and the general mental struggle to keep up in an uncontrollably frantic world.

The description of the apocalypse is the most poetically blunt we've seen: "The world broke." And it fittingly mirrors the protagonists'



broken lives, minds, identities, and perhaps a bit of real life too...

**Erlingur Einarsson**



**Details** Authors: Tom Lloyd Publisher: Gollancz Price: £12.99 Released: Out now

## STRANGER OF TEMPEST Honesty doesn't always pay

**The opening novel** in Tom Lloyd's new fantasy series is not boring, but the disjointed and confusing narrative is definitely a problem.

*Stranger Of Tempest* opens mid attack, and within seconds a naked lady is on the scene, covered in blood.



So far, so *Game Of Thrones* good. A mere six pages later it is two weeks earlier, but thankfully this is announced at the top of the page, and the tempest himself is properly introduced. Lynx is an honourable man with a past he would rather not discuss and a round belly that sounds worthy of a Santa suit.

On the lookout for work, he hooks up with Anatin, the ale-guzzling leader of a band of mercenaries who each take their names from a deck of cards. Lynx is quickly accepted into the deck, and is awarded the title 'Stranger of Tempest'.

So here we are, happily getting to know Lynx and his new gang, when somewhere between chapters three and four we've gone time travelling again and it is now present day, another six pages pass and it's the past again. There is enough time hopping to stress even the Doctor himself out, and it's only chapter four!

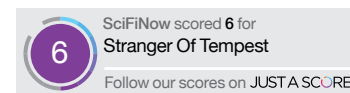
Lynx and his pot belly are a symbol of hope in a devious and dishonest

land, his inability to ignore a damsel in distress the catalyst for a murderous game of cat-and-mouse between the mercenary Deck and the fanatical, mage hunting Knights-Charnel.

It's worth sticking with it, as the latter part of the book definitely improves. The tone changes for the better as the game is played via deep, dark tunnels that houses an assortment of massive bugs, plants and a race of people that really ought to know better than to house-share with creepy crawlies.

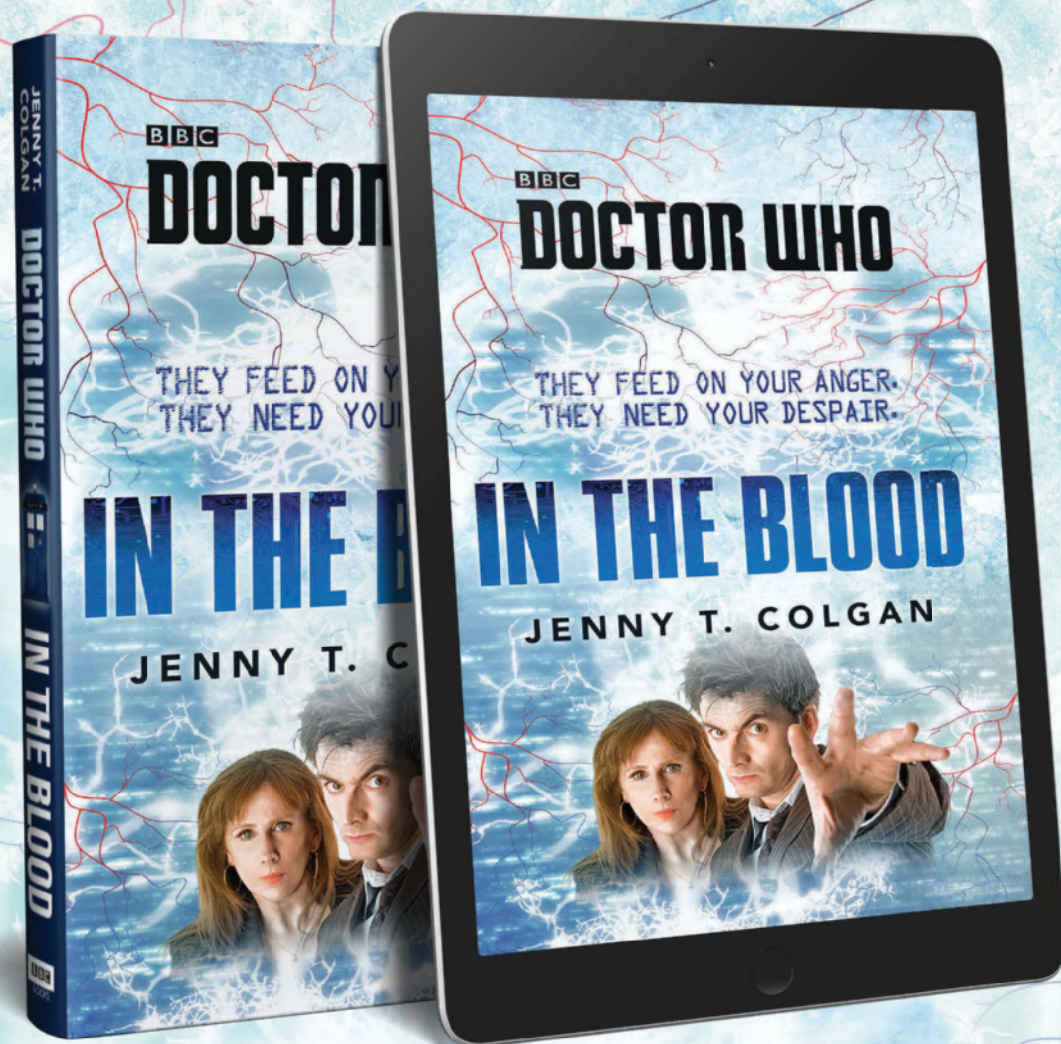
We'd advise reading it quickly as there's some fun to be had in spite of its flaws.

**Claire Nicholls**





**All over the world a mysterious  
sickness is spreading through  
the internet.**



**Can the Tenth Doctor and Donna save  
the world before it's too late?**

**OUT NOW**

An original novel featuring the Tenth Doctor and Donna,  
as played by David Tennant and Catherine Tate.



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GO SECONDS WITH

Tom Lloyd



## How would you pitch *Stranger Of Tempest* to new readers?

I've got the serious version: a traumatised veteran joins a rescue mission, only to be betrayed and hunted through a ruined underground city.

Then there's also the less serious version: man joins a bunch of drunken lunatics to rescue a madwoman, everyone makes some bad choices, lots of people end up naked at some point, then some idiot wakes up a monster.

Of course, it's both, and that's why I enjoyed writing the book!

## Is writing a band of mercenaries as much fun as you'd imagine?

I have to say, it is! This was an entirely deliberate thing, and I had to go on faith that it'd all come together properly, but I wanted a mixed group with skills, but little professionalism, a range of backgrounds and a good bit of banter between them. Before long I found their scenes the most enjoyable, and whenever I didn't know where to go next, I just got some of the mercs together and let them talk.

## Is there a bit of a Western influence?

Certainly. I think once you've got guns and lawlessness/law of the gun, the comparison is inevitable. I didn't want to play it up too hard and make it a distinct fantasy western, but it's a sensibility that comes very naturally to heroic fantasy and works well.

## Which fictional bodyguard or mercenary would you want looking out for you?

The first one who springs to mind does so because he's one of my own creations – Daken. As for others – I can't choose between Ammar ibn Khairan from *The Lions Of Al Rassan* and Darian Frey from the *Tales Of The Ketty Jay*. One for his culture, intellect, humanity and skill, and the other because it'd probably a whole lot of fun and excitement. Maybe

it would depend on how much trouble I am actually in...

*Stranger Of Tempest* by Tom Lloyd is available to buy now, published by Gollancz.



Authors: Yoon Ha Lees Publisher: Solaris Price: £7.99 Released: Out now

# NINEFOX GAMBIT

Wibbly wobbly timey-wimey stuff

**Don't try reading** this book if you're feeling a bit sleepy. It's best not to start if you haven't got a couple of hours spare to dedicate to it, either. Because while *Ninefox Gambit* looks, at first glance, like your average space opera, it's really far more complex than that, and you're going to need to pay attention to get the most out of it.

The actual plot isn't difficult to follow. After disgracing herself by using unconventional tactics in battle, Captain Kel Cheris is offered a chance to fix her reputation. A distant fortress has fallen into rebel hands, and Cheris is charged with reclaiming it.

The catch is that to do so she'll have to become a living host for an undead general, a brilliant but untrustworthy tactician whose consciousness has been preserved especially for situations like this.

Yes, beyond the ships, robots, and space battles, things get

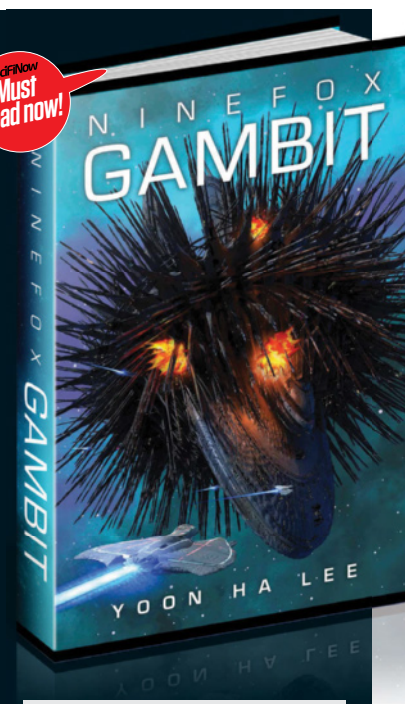
really convoluted. The first in a planned trilogy, *Ninefox Gambit* sets up an intriguing world where everything's based on time. It's not just an abstract concept here, it's the basis of an entire belief system, plus a means of governmental control, and even the material that powerful reality-bending weapons can be fashioned out of.

There's a lot to learn, and every page seems to deliver a new idea. Author Yoon Ha Lee never explains anything or pauses for the reader to catch up, so you just have to go along with it and piece things together as you go. It's challenging, but also deeply satisfying.

Cheris' world feels genuinely alien, with thrillingly unfamiliar social structures and technologies, and the attention to detail is simply stunning. Just don't ever let your concentration slip, or there's a good chance that you will miss something wonderful.

**Sarah Dobbs**

Sci-Fi Now  
Must read now!



8

SciFiNow scored 8 for  
*Ninefox Gambit*

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

**Ancillary Justice**  
Ann Leckie

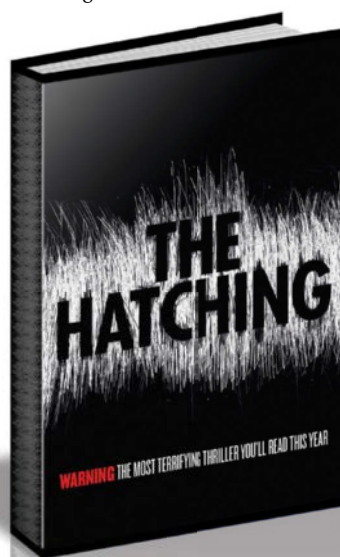
Another ambitious sci-fi novel that plays with alien ideas of gender and even consciousness.

Details Author: Ezekiel Boone Publisher: Gollancz Price: £12.99 Released: Out now

# THE HATCHING

Eight-legged freaks

**The Hatching** has already been snapped up for a TV series, which makes a lot of sense after only a few pages of this globe-trotting thriller. It reads like a blockbuster movie/TV show, which is both a good and a bad thing.



The big pitch is fairly simple (man-eating spider plague goes global), but Boone introduces a large cast of characters dotted around Earth to keep things moving along. It all kicks off with a nicely nasty sequence in Peru, before revealing that these ancient flesh-eating beasts are arriving in terrifying numbers in China and India, and they're going worldwide.

There's an admirable level of detail in the descriptions of spider biology and a commitment to giving each character a full back story, but the novel really comes alive in its action sequences. Boone knows when to offer glimpses of something horrible and when to really go for the gut, and those with a fear of arachnids should probably steer clear.

On the other hand, once you get past the spiders there's definitely a sense of familiarity. The structure recalls Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan's *The Strain*, and there's a strong whiff of *Independence Day* in the convenient triangle of the President, her lover the

Chief of Staff, and his ex-wife, the best arachnid expert in the country.

Still, among the slightly standard (and pretty much uniformly attractive) characters (FBI guy with an ex-wife and adorable daughter) there are some interesting standouts, like the doomsday-prepped couple who are actually pretty normal.

But while it may have blockbuster faults, it's also got blockbuster charms. It's addictive once you get into it, and Boone knows how to mount the big set-pieces. It makes for a fun summer read, and we're be interested to see where the story goes next.

**Jonathan Hatfull**

6

SciFiNow scored 6 for  
*The Hatching*

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

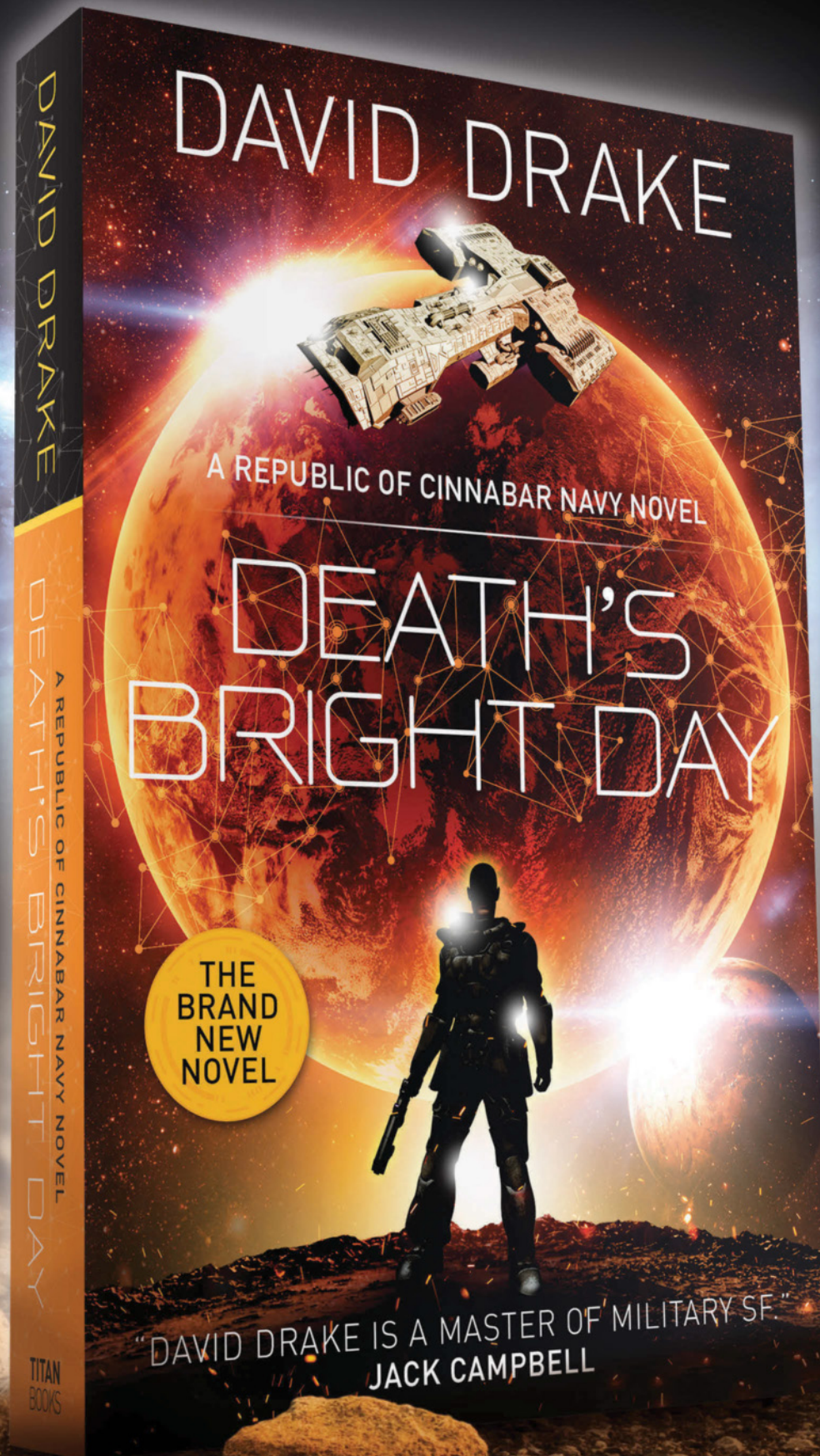


IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...  
**The Strain**  
Guillermo del Toro, Chuck Hogan  
A vampire plague slowly but surely sweeps through NY in the first of this fun trilogy.



**"DRAKE COULDN'T WRITE A BAD ACTION SCENE AT GUNPOINT."**

**BOOKLIST**



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# Ghost Hunting

Jason Arnopp tells us about his wickedly scary debut novel, *The Last Days Of Jack Sparks* WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

**W**e've all been given one of those memoirs. You know the ones, where the journalist writes about his experiences of travelling across America in a van only wearing sandals, or saying yes to everything, or eating nothing but chickpeas for a year. Jason Arnopp's *The Last Days Of Jack Sparks* starts out like that – kind of. It's the story of a rock-star reporter who decides to investigate the supernatural, from exorcisms and hauntings to mediums, armed with a lethal level of scepticism and scorn. But as you can tell from the title, things don't go the way he planned.

"I liked the idea of writing a scary novel that had the format of one of those celebrity authors travelling around the world as a theme or a mission," he tells us. "I really like those books, but they are kind of fundamentally egotistical, so I guess Jack Sparks was partly born of that, and partly born of kind of a Richard Dawkins mentality, that kind of dogmatic outlook on people who have faith. He ended up being a combination of Louis Theroux, Richard Dawkins and Hunter S Thompson!"

We spoke to Arnopp about the dangers of unshakeable certainty, the pros and cons of self-aware horror and being terrified by *Doctor Who*.

## What came first with this novel: the character of Jack Sparks, or the idea of investigating the supernatural?

The first thing was a man who becomes obsessed with a creepy YouTube video, and becomes obsessed with tracking down the people who made it. And so that idea lingered for a while, and then Jack Sparks came along somehow.

What came next was the general sense that I get that people are much more keen on certainty these days! On social media you don't tend to see people saying, "I don't have an opinion on this yet. I'm still researching, I'll come back to you!" The scary YouTube video came first, followed by the general theme of ego, belief and certainty, the way those interact in the social media age, and then it kind of went on from there with added exorcisms and hauntings and all kinds of madness.

## Was it fun to write a character who's so obnoxious?

Well, I must admit, it is really great fun to write an egotistical character. The weird thing about authors is that we are a really bizarre combination. You have to be pretty egotistical to write 100,000 words and say, "Roll

up, roll up, read every single one of these words, and you will like them." And at the same time every single author in the world is crippled with self doubt and waiting to be found out as a charlatan and an imposter.

I think the terrible thing and the sad indictment is that I found writing Jack worryingly easy! But his ego certainly doesn't go unpunished throughout the course of the book – it's pretty clear that his cocksure approach to life isn't really going to see him all that far in reality!

## There are quite a few classic horror scenarios in the book, including hauntings and exorcisms. Was that something you enjoyed getting to do?

Yeah, definitely. I think one of the joys of coming up with a concept where you have a central character who is setting out to investigate the supernatural as a whole is that it kind of gave me free rein to do all the fun supernatural stuff I like. I guess the supernatural is generally my favourite kind of horror.

Bodily possession always goes down well with me. It's a fundamentally scary device, I think because it echoes that sense that we all have that we can never really know what's going on in another person's head; that idea that someone can actually be a shell that's taken over by some kind of force.

## How do you feel about post-modern horror?

I'm all for it. I know it sounds ludicrously simplistic, but as long as the meat of the story is essentially good, I think it works great. In the mid Nineties, horror was pretty moribund, and then *Scream* came along and it was great. I think the key thing about *Scream* is that it was not only self-aware and slightly lampooning a lot of horror traditions, it genuinely took the slasher movie to a new level. It was really creative and inventive. Ideally, being self-aware is not quite enough for a story in and of itself; I think it also has to bring new things to the situation as well.

## Do you remember what your first encounter with horror was?

*Doctor Who* introduced me to horror. *Doctor Who* is the only pure sci-fi thing that I absolutely love, and the reason for that is that I've always seen *Doctor Who* as a horror show. I think the very first one I saw was 'The Hand Of Fear', and then 'The Deadly Assassin' came after that, and

## Ghosts are real

These characters would have been able to show Jack Sparks a bit of proof...



### Dr John Montague (The Haunting Of Hill House)

Dr Montague hopes to find proof of the supernatural at Hill House in Shirley Jackson's classic, but it's the fragile Nell Vance who'll pay for it.



### Thomas Carnacki (The Carnacki stories)

William Hope Hodgson's most enduring creation has lived on since the author's death, investigating the occult and telling us all his terrifying tales.



### John Constantine (Hellblazer)

Alan Moore's freelance magician won't do children's parties, but he will face the forces of hell with nothing but a cigarette, a grin and a healthy disregard for anyone else's safety.



### Sandman Slim (Sandman Slim)

LA's toughest muscle-for-hire isn't just bad news for ghosts. Vampires, demons, sleazy low-lives – he'll take care of them. This guy fought his way out of Hell, literally.



### Abraham Van Helsing (Dracula)

A preeminent physician from the Netherlands who also happens to have an excellent line in monster hunting. A little irascible, but he's the guy to call.

that had a really strong effect on me. I remember having some really vivid dreams about The Master at the time, I became confused at some point between dreams and reality, and I asked my mum if we'd ever gone hunting for The Master! And she very patiently and respectfully said "No dear, I don't think we did!"

*The Evil Dead* is probably my favourite horror film. I could probably watch *The Evil Dead* every weekend and be pretty happy with that. It has been a big influence, full of demonic possession and general unpleasantness. It's the gift that keeps on giving.

## Have you been surprised by any of the reactions to the book so far?

I'd be interested to see, because Jack's really a very outspoken celebrity atheist, how people of all kinds of faiths, or lack of faith, respond to the book. Not that it's a book purely about religion or about faith, but that's certainly one aspect of it. I mean, hopefully people will eventually start writing reviews complaining about the levels of bad language and extreme violence, because that will really help sell the book! So if

anyone would like to do that then please be my guest!



*The Last Days Of Jack Sparks* will be released on 28 July, published by Orbit.



**INTERVIEW**

Jason Arnopp



**“HOPEFULLY PEOPLE  
WILL COMPLAIN  
ABOUT THE BAD  
LANGUAGE AND  
EXTREME VIOLENCE!”**  
JASON ARNOPP



**Details** Writer: Marjorie M Liu Artist: Sana Takeda  
Publisher: Image Comics Price: £7.50 Released: 21 July

# MONSTRESS

**Epic fantasy, epic feels**

**The intricate cover** of art deco-infused steampunk alone is worth the price of entry, but the world within *Monstress* is genuinely breathtaking.

Set in the aftermath of a war between the Federation of Men and the Arcanics, Liu deftly sets the scene of her detailed world without need for clunky exposition. Our protagonist, Maika, looks human enough to pass in places without trouble, but against the witch-nuns of Cumaea there is no hiding her Arcanic nature.

The Cumaea, a horrifying religious order, harvest the bodies of the supernatural Arcanics, often just children, to sustain their own power over the people. Posing as an Arcanic slave to be bought, Maika infiltrates a Cumaea stronghold in order to find information on the murder of her mother.

Maika is no straightforward heroine though, as a connection to something very dark lies within – a very real demonic force that she has limited control over. Even without that infernal pull, Maika is badly traumatised from the war, and has little interest in helping others – even defenceless children being mutilated by the despicable witch-nuns. In other words, Maika is a fully rounded character, something that is perhaps a rare trait in teenage girl heroines, but it can make for rather grim reading.

Fortunately for the reader, two other protagonists join the fold – the adorable fox-girl Kippa, and the snarky two-tailed cat Master Ren. This balance of light and dark, horror and humour, war and magic is testament to the skill of Liu in building this epic fantasy.

This is the most beautiful comic created to date. Takeda effortlessly blends eastern and western comic storytelling traditions and styles to create something incredibly unique and special. The alternate Nineties Asia setting and matriarchal society run through with magic and mysticism allows for imagination to run riot in everything from character design to backgrounds to hidden details.

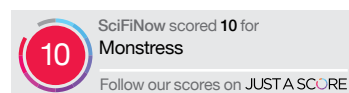
*Monstress* moves smoothly between telling of the trauma of war, showcasing the depths of xenophobia and racism, the horrors of totalitarian rule, the strength of family and belonging, and the joys and dangers of sisterhood. From the title alone the feminist angle is clearly seen, but this is no utopian yarn of paradise ruled by women.

Female rule does not undo racial inequality, slavery or bigotry. Liu celebrates the strengths of sisterhood, but avoids the myth that women are a more enlightened creature than man, and the comic deftly deals with issues of gender, race and sexuality with the subtlety and poise that many have failed to achieve.

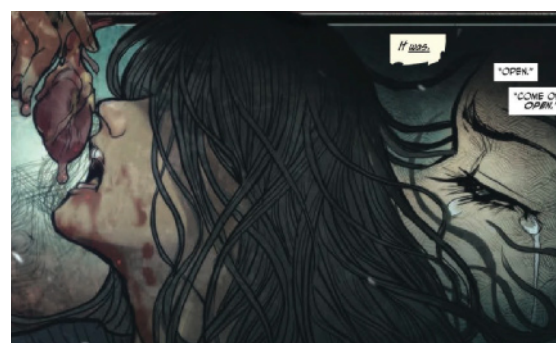
These issues are wrapped in the larger story of an entire fantasy world, complete with polytheist animal spirits, demons, magic and talking cats. Maika is a survivor and a killer. Master Ren is wise, but with a feline sense of humour. Kippa is young, and holds her own fox-tail like a security blanket.

Never has a comic been so cute or so horrifying within the same few pages. Takeda's ethereal art and Liu's masterful touch have created a very smart and imaginative fantasy that is guaranteed to break your heart.

**Laura Sneddon**



**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**  
**Izuna**  
Saverio Tenuta, Bruno Letizia, Carita Lupattelli  
Fantasy of mythical and ancient Japan, with war and spirits of nature.







**Details** Writer: Mark Waid Artists: Adam Kubert, Mahmud Asrar  
Publisher: Marvel Price: £14.99 Released: Out now

# ALL-NEW ALL-DIFFERENT AVENGERS: VOLUME ONE

Young justice

As part of the post-Secret Wars status quo, we have an all-new team to get acquainted with. Joining mainstays Iron Man and Vision are Sam Wilson's Captain America and Jane Foster's Thor, along with newcomers Miles

Morales, Nova (Sam Alexander) and Kamala Khan (Miss Marvel).

It's the newcomers who impress the most, with Nova and Marvel getting most of the choice lines while helping and hindering the Avengers in facing a formidable Chitauri threat. Unlike in previous years, you get the feeling that a foundation is being laid down for them to continue to flourish.

The story itself is fairly by the numbers, but a few nice twists make this a solid first volume for this new Avengers team.

Steve Wright



SciFiNow scored 7 for All-New All-Different Avengers: Volume One  
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

**Details** Writer: Dan Slott Artist: Giuseppe Camuncoli  
Publisher: Marvel Price: £10.99 Released: Out now

# THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN: WORLDWIDE

For the spider who has everything

Despite the Earth-shattering ramifications that were teased post-Secret Wars, it doesn't seem as if a huge amount has changed for the bulk of Marvel's superheroes. Aside from Peter Parker, that is, who has become the massively successful head of Parker Industries.

Having been used to seeing Peter constantly staving off very human concerns, it's jarring to see him in a position of power, but it makes sense for the evolution of the character. Try as they might, the presence of Miles Morales has made it more difficult to pretend that Parker is still a teen, so instead Marvel embraces it, pitting him against the Zodiac as he battles to keep control of his company.

Time will tell whether Spider-Man can retain his identity away from his traditional supporting cast, but considering the quality on show here, the signs are good.

Steve Wright



SciFiNow scored 8 for The Amazing Spider-Man: Worldwide  
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

**Details** Writer: Tom King Artists: Gabriel Hernandez Walta, Jordie Bellaire  
Publisher: Marvel Price: £13.50 Released: 12 July

# VISION

Welcome to the 'burbs

Marvel steps into the world of suburban horror with this chilling tale of the Vision and his Synthezoid family – wife Virginia, daughter Viv and son Vin. Originally created by Ultron, the Vision has become a much-recognised character over the years, but few have delved into his psyche in such an accessible way.

Indeed, this is a rare thing – a Marvel comic that requires little to no prior knowledge of the characters or world, as King creates a complete tale of Shakespearean tragedy and Gaiman-esque pathos.

The Vision once had a family, cruelly torn from him, and he yearns to recreate that sense of stability and belonging even as his memories of those times are deleted. But creating a family from scratch – a family designed to love and belong – is hardly the act of a sane individual, and the way in which cracks start to show is genuinely heartbreaking.

Walta's art captures the unease of this tale with an effortless hand, elevating a somewhat classic sci-fi tale into the higher reaches of the superhero genre. Bellaire infuses Walta's classic lines and detailed backgrounds with a pulpish flair, creating pages that ooze atmosphere and chilling dread.

As Virginia sits alone, fascinated by the pre-loaded memories that often bring her to tears, darkness floods into the room around her, highlighting her acute loneliness.



The oppressive quiet of watching windows of suburbia are familiar to anyone who has walked silent streets at night, and serve to truly infuse the moments of unexpected violence with shocking brutality.

There are missteps here; hammering a metaphor of racism onto these red synthetic beings at one stage is clunky and unwise, and an understandable point of contention for some readers.

Overall, this is an unexpected modern classic from Marvel, and unquestionably their greatest comic this year.

Laura Sneddon

SciFiNow scored 8 for Vision  
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**  
**The Omega Men**  
Tom King, Barnaby Bagenda, Romulo Fajardo Jr  
A bumper collection of the complete Omega Men series.







“THEY HAVE GIVEN ME  
ACCESS TO THE BEST  
ARTISTS IN COMICS.  
OKAY, THE BEST  
ARTISTS, PERIOD  
CHUCK PALAHNIUK”



# One moment at a time

Chuck Palahniuk  
on the astonishing  
*Fight Club 2*

WORDS LAURA SNEDDON

The rules have been broken – everyone is talking about *Fight Club*. The announcement that the sequel to the cult novel and film would be published in comic-book form caused a huge flutter of excitement around the world, and now the collected edition has hit the shelves to critical acclaim and mind-exploding fallout.

Convinced by comic-writing friends and the appeal of moving his craft into a new medium, Chuck Palahniuk is keen to lay accolades at the feet of his collaborators: artist Cameron Stewart, colourist Dave Stewart, letterer Nate Piekos and cover artist David Mack.

This is a comic you really don't want spoilers for, so we very carefully grilled Palahniuk himself.

***Fight Club* is a story that has been told via book and film, with a musical in the works. Was it the comic medium that enticed you to return to the story?**

There would be no sequel without comics. Neither a book or film could have held its ground against the original, but comics can create a fresh authority without direct comparison to a previous storytelling form. Among the many advantages of comics is that they allow some psychic wiggle room between the story and reality. Imagine a filmic army of dying children – it would be too tragic to bear.

**In what ways did the work of Cameron Stewart influence the development of the story, and did you feel like you were pulling any punches in your first comic?**

First, Cameron was fantastically patient and accommodating. He didn't bridle at the grim elements I wanted to include, or the very verbose first draft I submitted. Nor was he afraid to restructure the script so the panels created a better setup at the bottom of each right-hand page, and a better pay-off at the top of each left-hand page, aka the 'page turn reveal'. Creating a dozen strong plot points to fulfil the potential of 12-plus page turns was gruelling; the toughest plotting I've faced. Once I recognised Cameron's strengths – among them using small floating panels that include only a reaction shot of a character's eyes or mouth – I was able to rewrite everything to better fit his style.

**Your early writing has a very raw and immediate feel to it. Did switching to a new medium and having to learn the mechanics of the art form tap into the same kind of energy?**

In the style of fiction I first studied – minimalism – it's important to provide a context for the storytelling.

Minimalism recognises that the teller taints events, so a story needs at least a straw man to be accountable for the telling. That made it easy to include my writers' workshop on a meta level in the *FC2* book, and it spurred David Fincher and Jim Uhls to openly play with the medium of film in the movie version.

Beyond that, my editor at Dark Horse, Scott Allie, helped identify the mechanical aspects of printed comics and how we could use seemingly sloppy printing and smeared ink to add another layer of 'reality' to the make-believe story.

**The characters of *Fight Club* are almost without gender, but with the overall drive of Tyler having such masculine language. The sequel really feels like a big departure with the expansion of Marla. Will we see more of her history in the future, perhaps?**

In light of the big reveal at the end of *FC2*, yeah, Marla will have a giant role in the next instalment. Regarding gendered characters, I've always focused on verbs and tried to ignore gender or race. Verbs are universal, and occur in a reader's mind with greater power than descriptive language. Verbs allow the reader to impose herself or himself in the action. Alas, comics need faces, so I asked Cameron to depict each main character as the friend of mine on whom the character was based. For example, the original 'Tyler' did have shaggy blond hair and a chin like the toe of a boot.

**Are there underlying themes that have become apparent since finishing the comic, or is everything deliberately outlined in the beginning?**

Gosh, I wish I were that bright! Nothing is planned too carefully, because that chokes off my joy in executing the script. At best, I create a framework, then present that to peers, who identify the latent themes and bring them to my attention. This becomes a mystical therapy wherein friends recognise my demons before I do. Once the demons are on the page, I can manipulate them instead of being manipulated by them. 'Tyler' becomes my bitch instead of the previous way around.

**Despite your reputation as the 'torchbearer for the nihilistic generation', your novels always have an optimistic and romantic note. What drives you to both shock and cheer your reader, and how on earth did you and Cameron decide how to end this sequel?**

Every generation must reinvent the idea of romance, otherwise it becomes trite and powerless. That said, I'm always experimenting with social models and

INTERVIEW

Chuck Palahniuk



## Strange times

Enter disturbia with Chuck Palahniuk



**Invisible Monsters (1999)**

Originally written before *Fight Club* but initially rejected for being too disturbing, this tale of reinvention is a firm fan favourite.



**Choke (2001)**

A sex addict cons money from strangers by pretending to choke during meals. Palahniuk knowingly tells people not to read this. Don't listen.



**Lullaby (2002)**

A short poem is killing infants – a culling song read by the unwitting. Among his fans, this is a comedy and critical favourite.



**Haunted (2005)**

A collection of short stories, including the infamous 'Guts' – a story that has caused over 100 people to faint at public readings. Be warned!



**Make Something Up (2015)**

A new collection from the mind of Palahniuk of all-new disturbing short stories and a novella, including one from the *Fight Club* universe with Tyler Durden.

storytelling models, and the smallest model is simply two people meeting and forming a union. Perhaps my obsession comes from my insecurity in social situations. Not knowing how to act, I always want a script and a ritual to follow. So the rules of *Fight Club*: our writers workshop is very structured, allowing each person to present work and comment on each other's work.

In early meetings I sat with Cameron, Scott Allie and Dave Stewart, and we hashed out the overall look and recurring devices of the book. My recollection is that Cameron suggested the shocking final pay-off, but he says I did. Even if I did invent that gruesome ending, I could only do so because I was among people who were courageous or foolish enough to back me up.

**What's next from the desk of Chuck Palahniuk?**

This October, look for a secret project to launch. It's something I've never done, and something no one has brought to market. Book and comics stores will puzzle over where to shelve it. Dark Horse and Scott Allie have given me access to the best artists in comics. Okay, the best artists, period. And this mystery book will be a collaboration between me and a dozen of my favourite artists.

Beyond that, the current Kickstarter campaign to fund a film version of *Lullaby* is almost complete after only a week, and still has three weeks to run. The film should be excellent. There's too much more to list here. And some topics – the musical – I'm forbidden to discuss. For now I'll be touring the states in June and July. In

October I'll be in Prague. It's very exciting to finally see the part of the world my great grandparents left a century ago.



*Fight Club* will be published on 30 June.



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*Child's Play Strange Days Spider-Man: The Animated Series*

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COMPLETE GUIDE

# CHILD'S PLAY

THE CREATORS OF THE WORLD'S SCARIEST PUPPET  
ON UNLEASHING CHUCKY 106

AN IMAGINE  
MONTHLY









# THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO CHILD'S PLAY

THE SIX-FILM SERIES STARRING CINEMA'S MOST TERRIFYING DOLL HAS STALKED ITS WAY INTO AUDIENCES' HEARTS ACROSS FOUR DIFFERENT DECADES. SCIFINOW EXPLORES FURTHER...

WORDS CALUM WADDELL

**In the Eighties, horror franchises were a dime a dozen, but what many fans of the time forget is that few of them were a success. There were the obvious trendsetters: *Friday The 13th*, *A Nightmare On Elm Street* and a belated continuation of Michael Myers with *Halloween II* (1981) but multiplex-wise, there was not much else. Sure, direct-to-video sequels to such familiar fright-flicks as *The Howling*, *Puppet Master*, *Sleepaway Camp* and *Slumber Party Massacre* kept rental store shelves busy, but in terms of actual multiplex movies the pickings were slim.**

As such, it was something of a surprise when, come 1988, one of the year's sleeper success stories was unleashed: the killer-doll frightener *Child's Play*. Moreover, by the turn of the decade, Chucky the psycho-supernatural scare-maker had become just as much a recognisable figurehead of fear as such iconic characters as Freddy Krueger and Jason Voorhees. More to the point, the pint-sized slasher was headlining big studio shockers at a time when such carnage-inspiring colleagues were, by and large, giving up the ghost (Freddy would be 'dead' in 1991, and Jason took a four-year hiatus in 1989). So what was it about

Chucky? A personality who surely ranks as the most unlikely celebrity of slice-and-dice cinema?

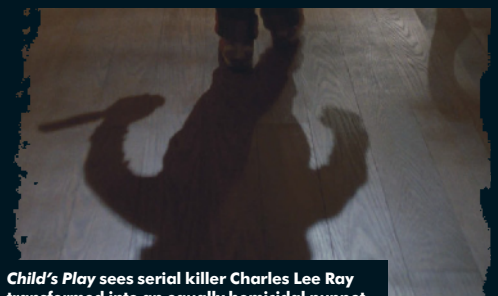
"I wrote *Child's Play* when I was still at college," begins Don Mancini, the creator of the franchise. "I was a student at UCLA. A couple of my friends at the time were working for Charlie Band at Empire Pictures. At the time, Charlie was doing stuff like *Trancers* and *Ghoulies*. He read the script to *Child's Play* and offered me my first job on a film called *Cellar Dweller*. However, he didn't think he could do *Child's Play* because he thought it was going to cost too much money – and of course, he went on to launch *Puppet Master*. But having now got a proper screenplay to my name, I was able to get MGM to read *Child's Play*, and they optioned it. I knew I was not going to be able to direct it, but I was happy when they told me Tom Holland, who had done a great film called *Fright Night*, was going to be the guy in charge."

Holland, a veteran of horror, having penned oddball monster mash *The Beast Within* (1982) and acclaimed Alfred Hitchcock follow-up *Psycho II* (1983), was enjoying a career peak at the time *Child's Play* hit his desk. Having achieved box-office success from directing vampire satire *Fright Night* (1985), the filmmaker had already demonstrated that he could mix macabre thrills

with well-timed laughs, and it was this heady, genre-bending formula that made *Child's Play* such a revelation.

"I knew I wanted this to be more of a comedy than a straight horror film," maintains Holland. "The thing about Chucky is that I thought, 'If we play this straight, surely people will just laugh at the entire idea. You can kick this little doll down the stairs, can't you? But if you play it for laughs you can probably make the audience forget about how none of it makes any logical sense.'"

Focusing on downtrodden single mother Karen Barclay (played by Catherine Hicks), who desperately turns to the black market to purchase her son a cut- ➤



*Child's Play* sees serial killer Charles Lee Ray transformed into an equally homicidal puppet.





Star Trek: The Voyage Home actress Catherine Hicks appears as widowed mother Karen.



Chucky preys on Karen's young son Andy (Alex Vincent).

➤ price – but unfortunately possessed – ‘Good Guy’ doll, the original *Child's Play* notches up some solid tension before bombarding audiences with some darkly humoured and over-the-top set pieces. With a bigger budget than most horror films of the era (\$9 million), the stylishly realised *Child's Play* also looked like a legitimate blockbuster. Meanwhile, in an era where censorship was rife, the advertising for Chucky's initial romp misleadingly stressed that this was more of a ‘thriller’ than a slightly subversive slasher flick. Behind the scenes, however, there was tension between Mancini and the director calling the shots.

“Tom added things to the script that I thought did not work,” admits Mancini. “The idea of voodoo... that Chucky is possessed by the spirit of a serial killer... At first I was against it. In my original script, Chucky was the id of this little boy – he was the demonic manifestation of his inner anger. It was a very Freudian story. Of course, now you cannot imagine Chucky without that angle to his character, so full credit to Tom. He was [also] going to have him speak as a woman. Tom was a big fan of *The Exorcist*, so he wanted Chucky to sound like Linda Blair did in that movie. Somewhere there is a whole cut of *Child's Play*

where Jessica Walter [star of *Arrested Development*] is the voice of Chucky. It made Chucky sound as if he had gender issues. He sounded so flamboyant and camp. I was watching it and laughing so loudly, and for all the wrong reasons!”

As such, a decision was made to get in someone better suited to bring vocal traction to the mini-marauder, and it would be Oscar nominee and future *Lord Of The Rings* star Brad Dourif who solidified Chucky as a seriously sinister villain. “That first film is just such a great nightmare movie – a very creepy story about a doll that comes to life,” begins Dourif. “It was a fantastic gig, and I am thrilled that it lasted for six films, and hopefully we will have more to come. I think that *Child's Play* has been so successful, because when it boils down to it, it is just a very spooky concept, but executed with its tongue placed firmly in its cheek.”

*Child's Play* also bucked the trend for teen-centred horror movies that were common during the Eighties – another reason, perhaps, for the film's blatantly misleading advertising campaign: “At the time there was a lot of discussion about how to get women into horror movies,” reveals Holland. “So with *Child's Play* we had an older protagonist – a single mother who the women in the audience could really pull for. That was quite radical for 1988, believe me. The advertising also played this up as more of an adult-orientated Hitchcockian suspense movie – but yes, of course, it was a horror-comedy. It was a movie about a killer doll, for crying out loud!”

Released to a reception that surprised even MGM's brass (almost \$45 million during the relatively quiet winter period), *Child's Play* was 1988's most surprising hit movie. As such, a decision was made to rush into pre-production for a sequel – even if the very concept ➤

## “IT MADE CHUCKY SOUND AS IF HE HAD GENDER ISSUES. I WAS WATCHING IT AND LAUGHING SO LOUDLY, AND FOR ALL THE WRONG REASONS!”

DON MANCINI

## FILM BY FILM

Your quick guide to each Chucky-starring flick

### CHILD'S PLAY

(Tom Holland, 1988)



The original *Child's Play* still holds up as an innovative horror outing that occasionally tickles the funny bone thanks to some witty one-liners from the Brad Dourif-voiced Chucky. The protagonist is kept in the shadows for much of this first film, and a number of false endings showcase Holland's genre-savvy approach to the subject.

*Child's Play* is available to buy on DVD and Blu-ray now, distributed by 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment.

### CHILD'S PLAY 2

(John Lafia, 1990)



Pretty much more of the same as the first outing (right down to a similar ‘the doll won't die’ finale), *Child's Play 2* veers even further into comedy territory, but still manages to craft a few good scares. There are some nasty surprises too – with one of the main characters meeting an unexpectedly grim death. It's a strong outing, and not one to be missed.

*Child's Play 2* is available to buy on DVD and Blu-ray now, distributed by Universal Pictures UK.

### CHILD'S PLAY 3

(John Bender, 1991)



The most controversial of the six films, this unassuming slasher flick – which gives Chucky the chance to lop off limbs across an army base full of trainee teen soldiers – is also the least interesting of the original trilogy. Despite its darker tone, *Child's Play 3* offers up a generally ‘no-thrills’ sequel and promptly died at the box office (it went direct to video in the UK).

*Child's Play 3* is available to buy on DVD and Blu-ray now, distributed by Universal Pictures UK.

### BRIDE OF CHUCKY

(Ronny Yu, 1998)



Reinventing Chucky as a wise-cracking postmodern hipster creation and featuring jokey nods to everything from *Hellraiser* to the previous three films, *Bride Of Chucky* is odds-on the best of the franchise. With that said, this all-out farce might not play well with those who enjoyed the previous three films. Director Ronny Yu would go on to helm *Freddy Vs Jason* (2003).

*Bride Of Chucky* is available to buy on DVD now, distributed by Prism Leisure Corporation.

### SEED OF CHUCKY

(Don Mancini, 2004)



Attempting to take Chucky into John Waters-style campy comedy (Waters even has a cameo) was a good idea, but this sequel is just too haphazardly realised. The attempts to shock are occasionally fun, but the narrative lacks any sort of fluidity (the entire film is really just a barrage of thinly related gags), making this meandering sequel a bit of a chore.

*Seed Of Chucky* is available to buy on DVD now, distributed by Momentum Pictures.







The first movie went on to receive a highly positive critical reception.



## CURSE OF CHUCKY

(Don Mancini, 2013)



Not quite a return to form for Chucky, thanks to frequent poor pacing and simply falling short on most fronts, but this sixth film is far better than its direct-to-DVD moniker might suggest. Notching up a few frights, *Curse Of Chucky* – at the very least – bodes well for the future of the franchise. The female star also happens to be Brad Dourif's daughter!

*Curse Of Chucky* is available to buy on DVD and Blu-ray now, distributed by Universal Pictures UK.





➤ of a second movie left Holland feeling ever so slightly bemused. "When we were filming *Child's Play*, no one saw a franchise," laughs the director. "I heard from MGM, 'Okay, now we need to do *Child's Play 2*', and I could only say, 'Are you crazy? We killed that doll! At the end of the first film I burned him, chopped him up and smashed him into little bits. How can there be a part two?' But all credit to them, they managed to spin out film after film after film."

With *Child's Play 2* (1990), however, changes were afoot. With the Reagan (and later Bush) administrations in the White House fighting a very commercial war against horror and sex movies – resulting in both *Playboy* and *Fangoria* being pulled from several name US newsstands – MGM announced that it would no longer make 'those kind of films'. Paramount followed suit, confirming that they were discontinuing the *Friday The 13th* mythology, New Line struggled to get a release for its censorship-plagued *Texas Chainsaw Massacre Part III*. As such, Chucky was without a home.

"It was amazing, looking back," continues Mancini. "We just had a movie that made millions, and here is

MGM telling us they won't do the sequel after all. That was the climate back then – 'horror is bad for your image'. So we went to Universal Pictures, and they said they would love to do *Child's Play 2*. That was that – it was full steam ahead on the next movie, and a big gain for Universal."

Released in 1990 to slightly less success than its predecessor (grossing \$10 million less overall), *Child's Play 2* is, at least, an honourable continuation of the Chucky lineage. Offering little reason for the doll's return – other than his desire to once again stalk, and possess, the troubled child Andy (played by the returning Alex Vincent), the first sequel is certainly well-crafted by John Lafia, who was brought in to do some fresh writing on the original movie. Also boasting a solid supporting turn from British thespian Jenny Agutter, *Child's Play 2* might be formulaic, but it is at least fast-paced and fun. The same, sadly, cannot be said for the controversial *Child's Play 3* (1991), which smacks of having been turned around at a lightning-fast rate. With an older, and understandably disorientated and dispirited, Andy now joining the army,



Despite arguably being the series' tamest entry, *Child's Play 3* is also the most controversial.







Chucky returns to once again attempt to take his spirit and place it into a younger body.

Playing out as a rather routine body-count caper, *Child's Play 3* would likely have disappeared into VHS bargain bins (its theatrical run netted a mere \$20 million) were it not for the controversy surrounding the death of two-year-old Jamie Bulger at the hands of two ten-year olds.

"It was a really terrible time for me" bemoans Mancini, who was hounded by the British right-wing press. "First of all, we gave these films ratings for adults and not children. But the most ironic thing about it is that *Child's Play 3* is the mildest of all the *Chucky* movies. I have heard that in the wake of the Bulger killing, *Child's Play 3* gained this notorious status among children in British playgrounds. It became toxic: 'Some of our brethren have been moved to kill because of this movie.' It became a rite of passage thing: 'Have you actually watched it? Dare you watch it?' I can only imagine how disappointed these kids were when they finally did see it, because it is really, really mild. I can't imagine *Child's Play 3* inspiring anyone to do anything but fall asleep [laughs]. It is my least favourite of all six films and most of the fans agree."

Dourif is equally perplexed that this rather tame terror title ended up achieving some kind of strange notoriety. "Obviously horror is a bloody genre, and serial killers are very much a part of the subject matter, but from what I understand, it is unlikely that these kids even saw that film," affirms the actor. "It may have just

been a defence – 'Chucky did it' – I don't know... they may have watched it, who knows? But first of all, if they did, what were they doing watching that movie? They are too young to see a film like that. In my opinion it is up to the parents to decide what their children should or should not see."

Post-*Child's Play 3*, and Chucky seemed to be dead and buried. Fear-franchises felt like a decade ago, and audiences for horror had to look to the blossoming VHS market for their fix. Then, of course, came Wes Craven's *Scream* (1996), and just like that a new breed of self-referential and achingly 'hip' genre efforts began to arrive. Thankfully, *Bride Of Chucky* (1998) was one of the best.

"*Bride Of Chucky* is my favourite of all the films," admits Mancini. "It was the biggest-budgeted *Child's Play* movie, and it was also the biggest grossing at the box office. At that point we really emphasised the humour of the character. We decided to just go crazy with the comedy and, of course, we gave Chucky a girlfriend – and the fans really warmed to Tiffany."

Voiced by Jennifer Tilly, Chucky's new killer companion injected fresh comedy and carnage into the *Child's Play* franchise. Furthermore, thanks to the efforts of one of Hong Kong's greatest visualists, Ronny Yu (who helmed such whimsical fantasies as 1993's *Bride With White*), this third sequel looked far better than anyone could have expected. Awash in gorgeous colours and featuring some outstanding widescreen cinematography, *Bride Of Chucky* was widely acclaimed as a witty and well-realised slice of post-modern macabre.

Sensing a new and more irreverent approach taking shape, Mancini himself took up the job of directing the fifth film, the disappointing *Seed Of Chucky* (2004). Reuniting Chucky with his plastic-fantastic girlfriend, this farcical follow-up features everything from semen jokes to a doll-sex scene and marionette-masturbation, but rarely feels as edgy it should. Instead, played entirely for gross-out laughs, *Seed Of Chucky* just smacks of a franchise that has thoroughly exhausted its own potential.

"I know some *Child's Play* fans were split on *Seed Of Chucky* because it is more of a comedy than a horror movie," admits Mancini. "But you know, *Seed Of Chucky* lives on as a cult item. We screened it the famous Castro Theatre in San Francisco with a big dance number on stage. It was inspiring, because I have long wanted to do a *Chucky* musical – and



Things picked up for *Bride Of Chucky*, which introduced Chucky's girlfriend Tiffany (Jennifer Tilly).

## BEING INSPIRED

### Those other devil-dolls...

Of course, Chucky was not the first cinematic maisonette to go on a rampage. The most famous example, and the one which inspired Don Mancini, was *Trilogy Of Terror* (1975), in which the late actress Karen Black is terrorised by an African doll that comes to life to carry out a night of carnage.

"I loved *Trilogy Of Terror*," admits Mancini. "I also love a movie Anthony Hopkins did called *Magic*. But no one had really revisited that idea until *Child's Play* – and then there were all number of films coming out that cashed-in on the success of Chucky."

Among the most notable were Charlie Band's own *Puppet Master* (1989), directed by David Schmoeller and released to DVD by Full Moon Entertainment. Initiating the direct-to-video boom, *Puppet Master* led to several sequels and holds up as a creepy little classic in its own right. Hoping lightning would strike twice, the ever-opportunistic Band – who had turned down the chance to pick-up the original *Child's Play* script – initiated production on the far shockier *Demonic Toys* (1992).

Even more interesting is *Pin* (1988), a tightly woven weirdie about an anatomy mannequin that may, or may not, be alive... and the end result is suitably hair-raising. The most bare-faced rip-off of Chucky mania, however, came with *Dolly Dearest* in 1991 – in which a seriously ugly female variant, possessed by an ancient spirit, finds its way into a contemporary American suburb.

Deemed too lowbrow for a theatrical stint, *Dolly Dearest* premiered on video, and has, somehow escaped a re-release in the Blu-ray era – even if it enjoys a moderate fan following. Of course, with *Annabelle* from *The Conjuring* (2013), modern thrill-seekers have a new tormented toy to inspire nightmares.





## WAS CHUCKY GUILTY?

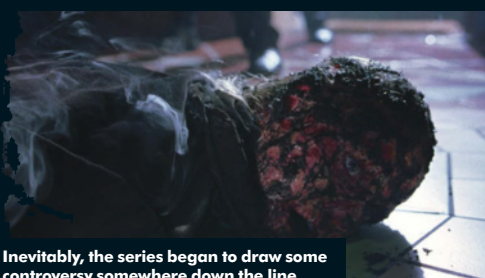
**How *Child's Play 3* became the scapegoat for one of Britain's most horrific murders**

It was 1997, and the UK, still gripped by some of the strictest film censorship laws in Europe, looked unlikely to change any time soon. So it was, then, that SciFiNow found themselves at a film market in Glasgow, and happened upon a swath of VHS 'video nasties'.

Yet, even as such notorious splatter flicks as *Cannibal Holocaust*, *Cat In The Brain*, *I Spit On Your Grave* and *The Beast On Heat* stared out from the stall, one potential punter wandered up to utter the immortal words: "Hey, do you have *Child's Play 3*?" The perplexed seller had no reply. "Why," he wondered, "Would anyone be looking for that?" Yet to uninformed UK horror buffs, Chucky's third instalment had become a byword for the vilest violence thanks to its inadvertent link to the torture and murder of two-year-old James Bulger by a pair of ten-year-old school truants. So how did this come to pass?

In light of such a horrific act of brutality, with Bulger having suffered an unthinkable awful fate, questions were asked across John Major's Britain at the time, namely how the supposedly 'civilised' UK had bred such bloodlust between two young boys. Faced with such a lofty psychological proposition, the right-wing press threw the blame elsewhere. And where better to point the finger than Hollywood? As journalists found the video rental histories of the parents of each lad, they could identify only one 18-rated film: *Child's Play 3*. It would have to do.

Seizing on this subpar sequel – the only violent movie they could locate – and somehow managing to assume both boys had seen the film, the tabloids also discovered that Chucky has paint thrown at him in the end sequence (Bulger had paint poured over him). That in itself was enough to set off a moral panic about 'video nasties', no matter how unlikely this dubious link actually was. Thankfully, common sense soon prevailed.



Inevitably, the series began to draw some controversy somewhere down the line.



➤ the audience there really seemed to get it. However, after *Seed Of Chucky* I knew that the fans were clamouring for a return to the scary tone of the first two films, so I decided we needed to reinvent the character all over again."

Series initiator Tom Holland is quick to agree. "I think when you go into farce you have exhausted everything else," he admits, referencing the later direction of the *Child's Play* films. "For me, farce is when you can't think of anywhere else to go. It is the end of line."

Yet, with Chucky on a near-decade long vacation, rumblings were afoot that *Child's Play* would reappear as a straightforward remake of the first film. Then, to everyone's surprise, a 2013 direct-to-video sort-of sequel, *Curse Of Chucky*, appeared – once again helmed by Mancini.

"What happened is that for years we were trying to get a remake done," claims the director. "In the mid-2000s all the major horror franchises, such as *Friday The 13th* and *A Nightmare On Elm Street*, were being redone on a bigger scale. But we found that *Child's Play* was mired in legal entanglements. We tried to work it out, and some lawyers made a lot of money, but we finally realised we could grow old and die waiting for this to happen. So we decided to do another sequel – but tonally, *Curse Of Chucky* is definitely a reboot. We returned to that feeling of Gothic scariness which made the first film stand out. But Universal told us it was going to be done for DVD. They wanted *Curse Of Chucky* to be made on a smaller scale. So the budget was really cut down – we had just \$5 million to work with. To put

that in perspective, *Seed Of Chucky* was made for \$12 million. So we really had to cut corners. We kept the film in one location, an old house, and we kept the special effects to a minimum."

Perhaps a little too slow-burning for its own good, *Curse Of Chucky* is at least a solid attempt to scrap the events of the last four films and attempt a straight-faced sequel to the first movie. For the first time in the franchise Chucky is not concerned about body-swapping, and the decision to keep the antagonist hidden for the bulk of the film pays off with some well-timed jump-scars. In addition, some Dario Argento-style music and cinematography gives *Curse Of Chucky* a far loftier appearance and sound than its home-video aspirations might indicate. Only a sluggish pace lets this fifth – and to date final – sequel down, because otherwise, *Curse Of Chucky* is a surprisingly slick bout of slasher cinema.

"I expect that the *Child's Play* series will keep going," reveals Mancini. "I am always thinking about different scenarios for Chucky. The next movie might feature Chucky on board a train. That could be fun. I love films that are set on trains anyway. There is a romantic element to trains. So doing Chucky on a train would be great. I think it would have a very claustrophobic feeling."

Certainly, as Chucky approaches his 30th anniversary, it is difficult to imagine that we won't see some sort of birthday-related sequel or remake. As Mancini himself admits, the character remains close to his heart – and for more reasons than just his desire





Despite its new status quo, *Seed Of Chucky* is arguably the worst instalment in the series.

**"I EXPECT THAT THE CHILD'S PLAY SERIES WILL KEEP GOING... I AM ALWAYS THINKING ABOUT DIFFERENT SCENARIOS FOR CHUCKY"**

DON MANCINI

to keep reinventing the demented doll for further generations. "I am very lucky, because I am the legal creator of the character, so I get a percentage of the Chucky merchandising," he laughs. "Okay, so that is not like being the inventor of Batman or the Simpsons but it is still royalties, and who can argue with that?"

"Now, I am not buying an island or anything, but a lot of writers have been less fortunate than me. When I completed the first script I went to the Writer's Guild to register it, and I met a lawyer who really took me under her wing. She advised me, before I registered the script, to describe the physical details of Chucky in more detail than I had. She said to me, 'If you sell this script and it is successful it could spawn a line of merchandising. So you want to make sure that you are the legal creator of the character in order to get a cut of that.' So on her advice I amended the description of Chucky to include '2.4 inches tall, red hair, freckles, blue eyes, red sneakers and so on', and I have felt eternally grateful to that woman ever since. She really protected me. And she helped to give me the security of a career and a character that I am very proud of."



Beyond *Curse Of Chucky*, Mancini is hopeful that there will be more films.





# STRANGE DAYS

Lightstorm Entertainment présente un film de Kathryn Bigelow Ralph Fiennes Angela Bassett Strange Days Juliette Lewis  
Sizemore Michael Wincott Vincent d'Onofrio musique Graeme Revell superviseur musical Randy Gerston musique additionnelle Deep Forest costumes Ellen Mirojnick montage Howard Smith,  
décors Lilly Kilvert directeur de la photographie Matthew E. Leonetti, a.s.c. effets spéciaux Digital Domain producteur exécutif Rae Sanchini Lawrence Kasanoff d'après une histoire de James Cameron  
scénario James Cameron et Jay Cocks produit par James Cameron et Steven-Charles Jaffe réalisé par Kathryn Bigelow



FLASHBACK

# STRANGE DAYS

A SMART, AHEAD-OF-ITS-TIME SCIENCE FICTION THRILLER, THE KATHRYN BIGELOW-DIRECTED, JAMES CAMERON-SCRIPTED STRANGE DAYS SADLY DIED A MISERABLE DEATH AT THE BOX OFFICE UPON ITS RELEASE 21 YEARS AGO. PRODUCER AND SECOND UNIT DIRECTOR STEVEN-CHARLES JAFFE TELLS SCIFINOW THAT A SHORT-SIGHTED MARKETING CAMPAIGN WAS LARGELY TO BLAME

WORDS OLIVER PFEIFFER

**"My biggest disappointment was that the marketing studio was unable to sell the idea of the picture to the general public. We had one of the coolest teaser trailers, which got people's attention, but they really didn't understand what the movie was about," Steven-Charles Jaffe tells SciFiNow. "Today it would be a no-brainer. They totally would have got it. In fact, if you released it today it would probably be a huge hit. Unfortunately, marketing plays a big part in a movie that is science fiction that has so many new concepts to it."**

Jaffe is referring to *Strange Days*, Kathryn Bigelow's largely and unfairly forgotten 1995 noir-drenched sci-fi mystery thriller. It revolves around hard-bitten LAPD-officer-turned-street-hustler Lenny Nero (played by a young American-accented Ralph Fiennes), who tries to flog 'virtual reality' footage from a new illegal technology on the black market. That footage comes from a nifty gadget dubbed 'SQUID' (Superconducting Quantum Interference Device), which records personal experiences direct from the cerebral cortex, allowing users to experience other people's memories and physical sensations.

"It was technology for civilian purposes – it was developed by the federal government to replace the audio wire and for surveillance purposes. Therefore, it was legal on a federal level, but not on the street," said Bigelow during the film's DVD director commentary. "The hero, Lenny, sells this technology [in the underground world] to people who want to experience a kind of thrill – vicarious adrenaline and drive or anything their mind can imagine."

*Strange Days* boasts an impressive ensemble cast (Juliette Lewis, Tom Sizemore and Vincent D'Onofrio among them), electrifying production design, an intriguing technological concept and a smart and immersive story from *Aliens* and *The Terminator* director James Cameron. But upon its release, the film made merely a fraction of its arguably modest \$42 million budget.

"It was fascinating, because it was rich in character and rich in this new technology where you were able to record experiences directly off a person's cerebral cortex," considers Jaffe. "It was the precursor to what we are now so hot and bothered by: virtual reality."

Being the brainchild of visionary Cameron, now renowned for his pioneering, technological screen advancements – in particular the stereoscopic filmmaking employed in *Avatar* – the filmmaker was keen to immerse the audience in the movie's world, mimicking the technology at the centre of the movie. "We needed to have a special camera small enough to be operated with a head's-up display, which didn't exist at the time," explains Jaffe. "This is where the camera operator is not looking through the viewfinder, but holding the camera literally in front of his face and as close to representing what the human point of view would be by operating the camera almost like a VR headset. So I said to Jim, 'Where do we find

such a camera like that?' and he said, 'I'm going to build it for you!'"

As a consequence of its controversial subject matter, the film wasn't afraid to delve into some very dark territory, including, at one point, depicting a murderous character forcing one of his victims to wear a SQUID device to experience what he's feeling as he's killing her. "It's such a mind-fuck!" admits Jaffe. "Maybe that was too much for audiences back then, I don't know. I just know that if it came out today it would be a huge hit, and nobody would be wondering about these things, because virtual reality is here."

Due to pre-production commitments on the Arnold Schwarzenegger actioner *True Lies*, *Strange Days* ultimately ended up being helmed by Bigelow, who had previously collaborated with producer Jaffe on the 1987 cult classic nomad vampire flick *Near Dark*. "It was a natural fit, as I'd been working with Kathryn for many years, and we're still absolutely best friends," continues Jaffe. "She's a real visionary, and I have enormous respect for her."

The producer is equally complimentary of Cameron's helpful guidance during production. "He was one of – if not the best – producing partner I've had," he reveals. "He was great, because he gave us autonomy, and if we had a problem or issue he was totally accessible." ➤



On-the-rise (at the time) actors Ralph Fiennes and Angela Bassett lead this noir-drenched sci-fi thriller.



## "I CAN'T STAND IT WHEN PEOPLE SAY 'IT WAS AHEAD OF ITS TIME'"

STEVEN-CHARLES JAFFE

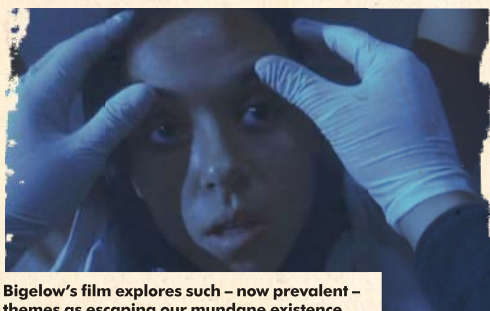
➤ Despite its sci-fi technological leanings, *Strange Days* depicts a raw and real (if bleak) 'future world' set on the cusp of the then-next millennium. The reality depicted was strategically intentional, as Jaffe elaborates. "There was an emphasis of not trying to reinvent the world, because we had talked about the pitfalls and dangers of science fiction, where you try to change things too much and you end up with something *Logan's Run*-ish," he explains.

"It was supposed to take place in 1999, which was only a couple of years ahead of the year we were filming it, so we had a couple of cars that were created by car manufactures, and we changed a few things, but we didn't do it to the extent of *Blade Runner*. I think it's one of the reasons why it holds up. We weren't trying to reinvent the wheel in science fiction. That's always a huge danger."

Also instrumental to this world's believability was having a strong lead performance. Securing a 32-year-old actor by the name of Ralph Fiennes – who was then at the beginning of his big-screen career – was a key component. "We were considering a bunch of people, and Kevin Duvan, who is one of the big agents at CAA, had just signed [him] and brought Fiennes to our attention. We met with him, fell in love with his acting, his smarts – everything! We couldn't foresee it, but he was amazing."

Co-starring was Angela Bassett, another actor on the rise at the time, who brought gutsy dignity as Nero's feisty limo-driving partner and former love interest Lornette 'Mace' Mason. "They had incredible chemistry, and that was a very pleasant surprise, and maybe wouldn't have happened without Duvan being the terrific agent that he is."

Fundamentally, *Strange Days* is about the possibility of escaping mundane reality and exploring an alternative parallel existence, a popular sci-fi theme explored brilliantly in such renowned genre fare as the original *Total Recall*, *Videodrome* and *eXistenZ* among others (see box out). It's a theme that is perhaps even more relevant today, given our contemporary heightened screen culture, where we arguably spend most of our time trying to distract ourselves from our lives, questioning whether we've indeed lost our own grip on reality. Do we allocate significant time to live in



Bigelow's film explores such – now prevalent – themes as escaping our mundane existence.



A youthful Ralph Fiennes portrays a hard-bitten former LAPD officer-turned-street hustler.



*Strange Days* was set on the cusp of the, then, next millennium.

the real world anymore? How much of our time is spent living vicariously through other people's existences – akin to the characters in *Strange Days* watching and thus experiencing the SQUID recordings of others?

"I can't stand it when people say, 'That movie of yours was so ahead of its time,'" laments Jaffe. "Please don't tell me it was ahead of its time – it's just too depressing! Again, I put emphasis on the marketing campaign department not putting enough of a good campaign as to why it didn't do well at the box office."

There is an intriguing no-go area in the world of *Strange Days* too, described in the film as "jacking into the big black", whereby a SQUID-wearer dies and the experience of their death is consequently recorded. Indeed, the footage from the adrenaline-induced Chinese restaurant robbery scene that opens the film is edited by Nero to exclude these 'blackjack' clips before he flogs the material on the black market.

However, inevitably the snuff footage ends up in Nero's possession, leading to him unknowingly watching and experiencing the rape and murder of a prostitute. This leads him on an investigation to discover the perpetrator, consequently plunging him deep into a cover-up murder operation that builds up to a high-powered climax taking place during city celebrations in the lead up to the next millennium.

"That was the most anxiety-ridden sequence for me as a producer, because I didn't have the money like that other guy, James Cameron," explains Jaffe who also served as second unit director. "I remember when I first read [the script] and said to him, 'This is an expensive movie!' There is one sentence that is



Bassett provided gutsy support as Nero's limo-driving former love 'Mace'.



No one does badass better than Angela Bassett!





incredibly expensive and reads: 'It's New Year's Eve 1999. There's a hundred thousand people dancing like there's no tomorrow.' I said 'Where am I going to get the money for all those extras?' and Jim said 'Well, that's your problem!'"

Although digital artists – courtesy of Cameron's company, Digital Domain – were on hand to assist, Jaffe still required some 20,000 real bodies to fill the New Year's Eve 2000 party in the foreground. "I didn't have the money for that many extras, so we contacted a dating service and said, 'We throwing this party. It takes place on New Year's Eve 1999... do you think your members would like to be extras for this event and have the time of their lives, blah blah,'" laughs the producer. "I was expecting them to say, 'How much are you going to pay us?' but instead he said, 'We could pay you \$20 a person and get 10-15,000 people'. I thought it was too good to be true!"

And it almost was too good to be true when nobody showed up at the call time. "I was thinking, 'I'm in deep shit. I don't know what we're going to do!' Then, all of a sudden bus loads of these dating service members arrived," continues the producer. "They had a great time, we got our extras, and that was that!"

Over 20 years since its initial release, the science-fiction thriller remains a daringly unflinching and deeply absorbing experience. It's all the more rewarding for predicting our current, seemingly obsessive attempts at escaping reality. ☹



Strange Days is available to buy on DVD and Blu-ray now, distributed by Universal.



Fiennes and Bassett convey palpable chemistry as former love interests-turned-justice-seeking partners.



## ESCAPE FROM REALITY

WE EXPLORE SOME OTHER ESCAPIST CURIOS



### 1 Tron (1982)

The Disney-backed original concerns computer hacker Kevin Flynn (Jeff Bridges), who is beamed into the mainframe of a computer in order to obtain evidence

to prove that a software engineer (played by David Warner) stole the videogames that he created. The virtual world depicted in the movie was created using then state-of-the-art graphics from a 2MB computer!



### 2 Videodrome (1983)

"Long live the new flesh!" Hauntingly blurring the realms of fantasy and reality to eerily hallucinogenic effect, David Cronenberg's

early body-horror classic centres on bored cable TV programmer Max Renn (James Woods), who taps into an illegal broadcasting station that depicts extreme violence and torture. He soon becomes literally consumed by the footage he views, and crosses over into the world of Videodrome with terrifying results. The shot of a seemingly pulsating videocassette in Renn's hand still remains viscerally disturbing.



### 3 Total Recall (1990)

Douglas Quaid (Arnold Schwarzenegger) is a bored construction worker who visits the memory implant company, Rekall, assumes the identity

of a secret agent and takes a virtual vacation to Mars – or does he? Director Paul Verhoeven expertly expands upon Philip K Dick's *We Can Remember It For You Wholesale* short story, and equally keeps you guessing long after the closing credits have rolled.



### 4 eXistenZ (1999)

A Cronenberg companion piece to *Videodrome*, *eXistenZ* explores what happens when a game designer (played by Jennifer Jason Leigh) seeps into her own virtual reality creation to ascertain whether her game has been jeopardised. In this futuristic world, the nifty organic game pods plug directly into your pre-fitted 'bio-ports' (located at the base of your spinal cord) via biotechnological umbilical cords – quite literally connecting you to the gaming world.



# FOREST OF DEAN

WORDS JAMES CLARKE

HOW THE FOREST OF DEAN AND THE WYE VALLEY HAVE BECOME THE GO-TO DESTINATIONS FOR FANTASY AND SCI-FI FILM AND TV

A cool spin-off of location filmmaking for genre movies has been the way that real-world locations take on a new lustre through their association with movies that have transformed something familiar into something unfamiliar. Think of Devil's Tower in *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind* or the Isle of Skye landscape that features in *Stardust* and so much of the New Zealand terrain in *The Lord Of The Rings*.

Now, we can add to this map of movie magic, a place that lies with quiet majesty between two rivers, the Wye

and the Severn, on the border between England and Wales. The Forest of Dean and the Wye Valley have become home to time travellers, heroes of Greek myth and star warriors.

Helen O'Kane, managing director of Puzzlewood in the Forest of Dean, knows only too well the excitement of having the movies come to town. She says of the last few years of filmmaking activity, "Puzzlewood has become a favourite location for sci-fi and fantasy due to its unique landscape," and judging by some of the films and TV shows that have used the backdrop as a filming location, there are many out there who agree.

## Doctor Who

If you've followed *Doctor Who* over the last several years then you will have likely bore witness to the good Doctor venturing more than once into Puzzlewood. In April and May 2010, the wood featured in the episodes 'The Time Of Angels' and its follow-up 'Flesh And Stone'. Puzzlewood served as the setting for an encounter with the Weeping Angels in the former, while the latter bore witness to the Doctor (Matt Smith), Amy (Karen Gillan) and River Song (Alex Kingston) racing against time to stop the Weeping Angels becoming an army. At a critical moment that showcases Puzzlewood, the Weeping Angels destroy the part-robot, part-natural trees aboard the Byzantium. The mythical feel that the woods provide only served to add to the otherworldly nature of the double episode.

In the 2013 Christmas special, 'The Time Of The Doctor', Puzzlewood once again featured, this time as the setting for another encounter with the Weeping Angels as the Doctor and Clara (Jenna Coleman) found themselves ambushed in the snow on a planet that they cannot quite identify.

The *Doctor Who* production also made use of the wider Forest of Dean area, and has ventured underground to dramatic effect. Clearwell Caves has been the site of plenty of the new *Who* adventures in

The door to Morgana's hovel remained after *Merlin* wrapped.

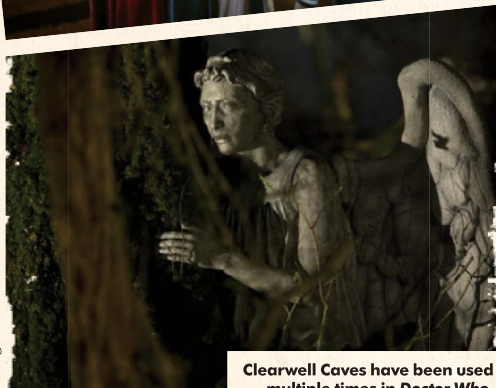


episodes like 'The Christmas Invasion', when it doubled as the Sycorax ship; 'The Satan Pit', as the Tenth Doctor faces off against the devil with his touching monologue; 'The Fires Of Pompeii', as the Doctor and Donna work to contain the famous eruption; 'The Time Of Angels' and 'Flesh And Stone', as Amy, River, the Doctor and the soldiers work their way to the previously mentioned forest scenes.

## Merlin

The adventures of the young wizard was the very first TV series to showcase the enchanted vibe emanating from Puzzlewood. It did so across all five of its series, as it told the story of how young wizard, Merlin, learned to wield the true power of his magic amid the company of friends and foes. Indeed, we could fill this entire issue recounting the hundreds of uses of the woods alone.

One of the key story locations created for the series at Puzzlewood was that of the secret hideaway of the sorceress Morgana (Katie McGrath). Other settings created at the wood included druid camps, dragons, unicorns and plenty of exciting chases. In finale 'The Diamond Of The Day', scenes featuring Morgana and Mordred (Alex Vlahos) were filmed in Puzzlewood, with their mission to the Valley seeing Merlin (Colin Morgan) and Gwaine (Eoin Macken) travelling there to



Clearwell Caves have been used multiple times in *Doctor Who*.



# FOREST OF DREAMS

ON LOCATION

"PUZZLEWOOD HAS  
BECOME A FAVOURITE  
LOCATION FOR SCI-FI  
AND FANTASY DUE TO  
ITS UNIQUE LANDSCAPE"

HELEN O'KANE



FOREST  
OF DEAN  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE,  
ENGLAND



➤ renew Merlin's powers at the Crystal Cave, while later on Gaius (Richard Wilson) and Merlin attend to Arthur (Bradley James), who has been wounded by Mordred. Under the cover of Puzzlewood's trees and rocks, and Merlin reveals his magic powers to the dying Arthur. In the episode 'The Hollow Queen', Puzzlewood is again rendered as an otherworldly setting when Merlin travels into the Valley of the Fallen Kings, a location used multiple times throughout the series, including as a trap for King Caerleon (Steven Hartley) in Series Four episode 'His Father's Son'.

West of the Forest of Dean stands Raglan Castle, which featured heavily in the first two series, as well as being revisited during Series Four. With its high bridge over a moat, the castle is just about perfect as a fantasy setting. In the world of *Merlin* the castle served as a key location for a place of magic as the Isle of the Blessed: it is where Nimueh (Michelle Ryan), Morgause (Emilia Fox), Morgana and Alator (Gary Lewis), the witches of the Old Religion, are to be found. In the episode 'Le Morte d'Arthur', Merlin is charged by the Great Dragon (voiced by the great John Hurt) to travel to the Isle of the Blessed to seek a cure for Arthur, who has not fared well in an encounter with the Questing Beast. The Isle of the Blessed also features in two-parter 'The Darkest Hour'.

*Merlin*'s production also ventured below ground. In several Series Five episodes, Clearwell Caves feature in all of their red rock glory; notably in 'The Disir', in which Merlin ventures to meet with three soothsayer women.

**Merlin made use of Puzzlewood in a lot of episodes.**



The caves also feature in 'Arthur's Bane' as the setting for the caves below Morgana Pendragon's citadel. The grounds above the caves were also used in 'The Wicked Day' and 'The Sword In The Stone'.

Amid the trees and rocks of the Forest of Dean are several beguiling stretches of water. For the Series Five episode 'Another's Sorrow', part of the action was filmed at Cannop Ponds for the scene in which Merlin finds Princess Mithian's (Janet Montgomery) message about Morgana by the stream. Perhaps most striking, though, was the production's use of Speech House Lake in the Forest. In 'The Gates Of Avalon', Speech House Lake can be seen as the mythic lake of Avalon, where Merlin witnesses a magical encounter. The lake features again in 'Excalibur', in which Merlin hides a sword underwater. In 'The Lady Of The Lake', Merlin says goodbye to the druid girl Freya (Laura Donnelly), who he has bravely tried to keep safe from a bounty hunter.

**Puzzlewood's magical aesthetic was first utilised by the *Merlin* location department.**



## STAR WOODS

### HOW FOREST OF DEAN BECAME PART OF ONE THE BIGGEST FILMS OF ALL TIME

In the summer of 2014, excitement quickly built around Puzzlewood when a phalanx of production support vehicles began parking up. All sorts of assumptions and speculation swirled, and in October 2015 when the final trailer for *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* premiered, sure enough, fleetingly could be glimpsed the twisting tree and rock formations of Puzzlewood.

The speculation had been true, and the wood featured in a critical scene in the movie as the real world location for the new, forest planet of Takodana that is the setting for a sequence in the film that stays particularly true to the fairy tale-inspired vibe that *Star Wars* creator George Lucas had so powerfully tapped into. On Takodana, Rey, Han and Finn go in search of the assistance of sagacious Maz Kanata – the site of Rey's all-important Force awakening.

Helen's excitement at Puzzlewood being showcased in *The Force Awakens* shines through when she recalls "What an honour it was to have [Lucasfilm] Kathleen Kennedy compliment us as 'the most magical forest on the face of the Earth'."



"KATHLEEN KENNEDY CALLED IT 'THE MOST MAGICAL FOREST ON EARTH'"

HELEN O'KANE



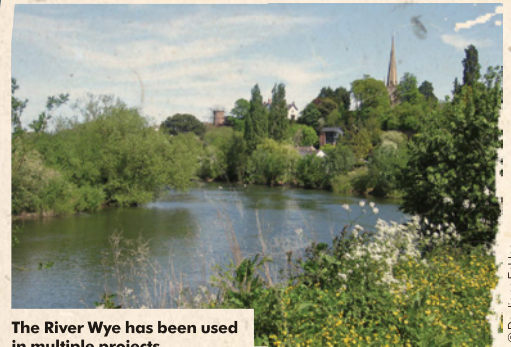
# FOREST OF DEAN ON LOCATION



Raglan Castle hosted filming for many episodes of *Merlin*.



The ruins of Raglan Castle provided a perfectly magical backdrop.



The River Wye has been used in multiple projects.

© Pauline Eckles

Some shots of Speech House Lake in the *Merlin* series enhanced the natural beauty of the setting, with visual effects elements that show Camelot towering in the background over the placid water.

*Merlin* also showcased the striking sandstone structure of the Wye Valley's Goodrich Castle, situated on high ground from where it looms over the River Wye. The castle, in all of its battle-hardened glory, features in 'Sins Of The Father' in which the castle sets just the right tone for the appearance of a great enemy of Merlin and his allies.

## Other TV projects

Following in wake of *Merlin*'s success was *Atlantis*. The series was inspired by Greek mythology, and followed the adventures of Jason (Jack Donnelly) and friends as they set out to discover the fate of Jason's father, encountering plentiful villains and monsters along the way. Puzzlewood features as the home of Medusa in the series and can be seen in the first series episode 'A Girl By Any Other Name'.

In the historical fantasy drama series *Da Vinci's Demons*, Puzzlewood was used by the producers of the series to create the look and atmosphere of 15th century South America. In the episode 'The Sun And The Moon', Da Vinci (Tom Riley) and his men find themselves in unknown territory. As the episode develops we realise that the adventure is set in the

South American jungle. This is where Puzzlewood's exotic terrain came into its own for the episode. In the episode 'The Fall From Heaven', in which Leonardo and Riario (Blake Ritson) escape the troublesome matter of almost being sacrificed.

## Dean on the Big Screen

The first feature film to shoot at Puzzlewood was *Jack The Giant Slayer* back in 2011. Bryan Singer's reworking of the ages-old fairy tale features Nicholas Hoult as Jack, who sets off on a mission to rescue Princess Isabelle (Eleanor Tomlinson) from the giants who have stolen her away. If Jack can rescue her then the conflict between giants and humans can be ended. In the movie, Puzzlewood featured as the forest of Gantua, the world at the top of the beanstalk, in which the giants live and through which Jack, Roderick (Stanley Tucci) and Elmont (Ewan McGregor) travel to find Isabelle.

The *Harry Potter* novels are steeped in a resonant connection with the Forest of Dean. During her childhood, the novels' author, JK Rowling, lived at Tutshill on the edge of Chepstow. In the final novel of the series, *Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows*, Hermione (Emma Watson) is talking with Harry (Daniel Radcliffe) and she recalls a holiday with her parents to the Forest of Dean.

Fleeting, Coppett Hill, in the Forest of Dean, features in *Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1*.

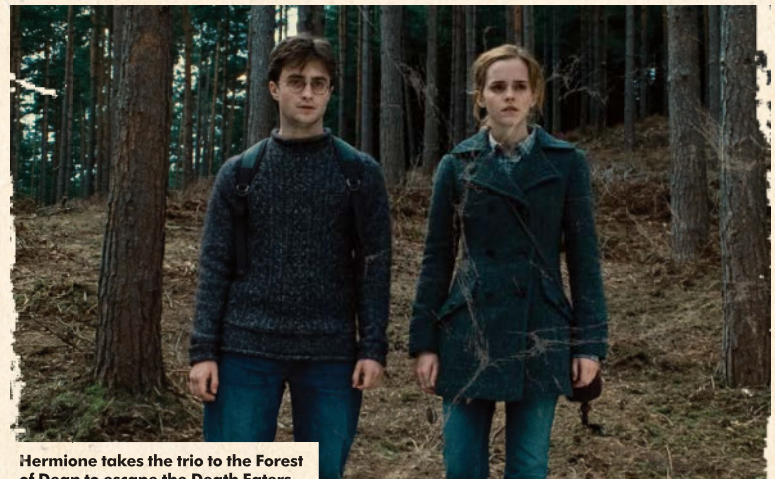
It's a snowy scene in which Harry, who is a little dazed and confused after apparating away from Godric's Hollow, asks where they are. Hermione explains that they are in the Forest of Dean, and details her connection to the area before breaking the news to Harry that his beloved wand has been damaged.

Additionally, in the trailer for *The Deathly Hallows: Part 1* there is a fleeting aerial shot that shows Harry, Ron (Rupert Grint) and Hermione walking along the bank of the River Wye near Horsehoe Bend at Symond's Yat.

Of the bigger picture that the movie and TV filming in the region has generated, Helen O'Kane notes, "The popularity of these productions have attracted international media, which has resulted in putting the Forest of Dean firmly on the map. Jetsetting fans are visiting from all over the world and leading to a huge economic boost the area." So, from a first modest initial enquiry by a location manager on *Merlin* who remembered Puzzlewood from family visits there, the Forest of Dean has become the Forest of Dreams for film and TV producers and their audiences. ✂



Clearwell Caves have been used in numerous BBC productions.



Hermione takes the trio to the Forest of Dean to escape the Death Eaters.



WITH A SEQUEL FINALLY ON THE WAY, WE TAKE A LOOK AT WHY SPACE JAM IS STILL A CLASSIC 20 YEARS LATER, AND WHY WE SHOULD ALL ASPIRE TO LIVE OUR LIVES LIKE MICHAEL JORDAN AND THE LOONEY TUNES LIVE THEIRS. COME ON AND SLAM IF YOU WANT TO JAM... WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER



# SPACE JAM

## Film

**RUNNING TIME:**

88 minutes

**RELEASE DATE:**

15 November 1996

**DIRECTOR:** Joe Pytka

**WRITER:** Leo Benvenuti, Steve Rudnick, Timothy Harris, Herschel Weingrod

**CAST:** Michael Jordan, Wayne Knight, Theresa Randle, Danny DeVito, Bill Murray, Billy West, Dee Bradley Baker, Bob Bergen, Bill Farmer

## About

NBA superstar Michael Jordan has it all: a promising career, heaps of cash and a loving family. But when he retires from basketball and decides to become a professional baseball player, things finally start to go wrong. Meanwhile, a group of tiny aliens called Nerdluks take Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck and the rest of the Looney Tunes hostage. To get out of becoming slaves, the Tunes challenge the Nerdluks to a game of basketball. But when the latter steal the talent of the best NBA players around to use for themselves, only one man can help the Tunes get their freedom back: Michael Jordan.

**Its concept may be a hideous result of corporate synergy, but *Space Jam* as a film is far from hideous. It's a non-stop avalanche of product placement and branding, but it's also cool, self-aware and frequently hilarious. Above all else, it's inspirational.**

The film opens with a starry night sky, 'I Believe I Can Fly' by R Kelly ringing out into eternity. The camera pans down onto a young kid, a ten-year-old version of NBA star Michael Jordan, shooting hoops in his backyard. He believes he can fly. He believes he can touch the sky. We believe he can touch the sky too. But his secret ball session is interrupted by his father emerging from behind a screen door, wondering what his kid is up to.

"Michael? What are you doing out here, son?" he asks. "It's after midnight." "I couldn't sleep, Pops," says Michael. "Neither could we with all that noise you're making," says Pops. "Come on, let's go inside." "Just one more shot?" asks Michael. "All right, just one," says Pops. And

thus, the entire basis of *Space Jam* is set: just one more shot. Everyone gets one more shot to be great.

"Do you think if I get good enough I could go to college?" says Michael. "If you get good enough you can do anything you want to, Michael," says Pops. "I want to play in North Carolina," says Michael. "I want to play on the championship team. Then I want to play in the NBA, and once I've done all that, I want to play baseball just like you, dad." "Baseball?" says Pops. "Now that's a sport. And once you've done all that, I guess you're going to fly, huh?" Yes, Pops. Yes, he is.

The second of Michael Jordan's one-more-shots comes in the form of a career change. He has now transformed into the older Michael Jordan, played by the actual real-life Michael Jordan, and the whole of his astonishing, fast-paced basketball career is shown as a montage through the opening credits. Everything in his life is going swimmingly and exactly to plan.

In keeping with the plan he set way back in his backyard in the Seventies,

Jordan finally announces that he's ready to retire and, shock, start a new life as a major league baseball player, just like his late father, James R Jordan Sr. He joins the Birmingham Barons and begins the next chapter of his life. However, it quickly transpires that he's terrible at baseball. He could slam-dunk, flip-flop, squip-squop, and whatever else on the basketball court, but on the baseball pitch he's pretty much useless. He took his one last shot and he blew it.

The Looney Tunes also find themselves in need of one last shot down in Looney Tunes Land. While trying not to get killed by Elmer Fudd out in the woods, Bugs Bunny (technically the star of the film, but we all know that title actually belongs to former-Phoenix Suns player Charles Barkley) ends up coming face-to-face with a group of angry but totally not menacing aliens from Moron Mountain, a demonic theme park based in outer space.

Under the orders of their boss, Mr Swaskhammer (voiced by Danny DeVito), they are to capture Bugs and his Looney Tune friends and make them their slaves, forcing them to perform at Moron Mountain night after night for the rest of their lives. In order to save the entire population of Looney Tunes Land, Bugs has one shot to win back their freedom. According to the totally-official-and-not-made-up-at-all rulebook, captors have to give cartoons a chance to defend themselves before forcing them into captivity. Bugs tricks the tiny aliens, as Bugs often does, and challenges them to a game of basketball. The aliens have no chance.

And yet through maniacal tricks and a magic basketball, the aliens successfully sneak into an NBA game, piled on top of each other under a long trenchcoat, and steal the sporting talents of championship superstars Charles Barkley, Shawn Bradley, Patrick Ewing, Larry Johnson and Muggsy Bogues. Suddenly, they're ➔

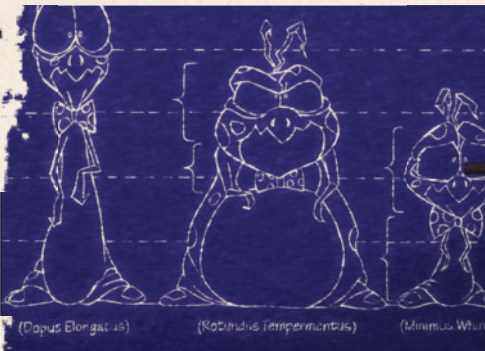


Michael Jordan quits basketball for major league baseball.





The MonStars' new look takes the Looney Tunes by surprise.



**"IT'S THE ENTIRE BASIS OF SPACE JAM:  
EVERYONE GETS ONE MORE SHOT  
TO BE GREAT"**



The Looney Tunes challenge their captors to a game of basketball.

## CLASSIC QUOTES

**"IT'S BECAUSE I'M  
WHITE, ISN'T IT?"**

BILL MURRAY

**"BUT MOMMY, I DON'T WANT TO  
GO TO SCHOOL TODAY! I WANT  
TO STAY HOME AND BAKE COOKIES  
WITH YOU!"**

DAFFY DUCK

**"BUT I'M A BASEBALL  
PLAYER NOW!"**

MICHAEL JORDAN

**"WHATEVER YOU DO,  
DON'T FORGET MY NORTH  
CAROLINA SHORTS"**

MICHAEL JORDAN

**"I'VE GOT OTHER SKILLS. I COULD  
GO BACK AND WORK ON THE  
FARM. OR MAYBE I COULD GO  
BACK TO THE JUNGLE AND BE A  
MISSIONARY AGAIN"**

SHAWN BRADLEY

**"I TOUGHT I TAW... I  
DID! I DID! I DID TEE  
MICHAEL DORDAN!"**

TWEETY PIE

**"I MAY NOT BE VERY  
TALL, BUT... I'M SLOW"**

STAN PODALAK

**"WE'VE GOT BALLS!"**

SYLVESTER

**"I PROMISE I'LL NEVER  
SWEAR AGAIN. I'LL  
NEVER GET ANOTHER  
TECHNICAL. I'LL  
NEVER TRASH TALK. I  
WON'T GO OUT WITH  
MADONNA AGAIN"**

CHARLES BARKLEY

**"WHAT KIND OF CAMERA  
IS THAT? WOULD YOU NOT  
POINT IT AT ME PLEASE AND  
CLOSE THE LENS CAP?"**

BILL MURRAY





Michael Jordan is Bugs and friends' last chance for freedom.

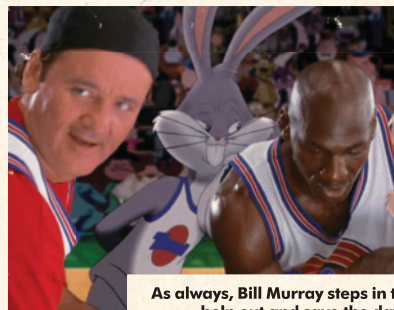
➤ not tiny, unthreatening aliens anymore; they're huge, muscular and coordinated. They are MonStars. The only chance the Looney Tunes have left to beat them and win back their freedom is by finding their own unstoppable basketball superstar to play with the newly established Tune Squad. Their only chance is Michael Jordan.

After an eventful round of golf with Bill Murray and Larry Bird, a lot of faffing and some meddling from Bugs Bunny, Jordan gets sucked through one of the holes and ends up in Looney Tunes land. The Tunes beg for his help, Jordan agrees, and they play basketball against the MonStars. Finally, with only a few seconds left on the clock, and with the scores neck and neck, Jordan just goes for it. He grabs the ball, and he jumps.

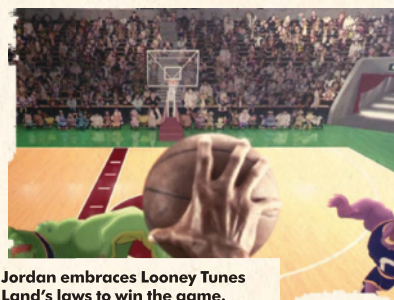
He's not jumping for the fame or the money. He's not jumping to salvage what might be left of his basketball career. He's not even jumping to prevent Mr

Swackhammer turning him into Moron Mountain's main attraction. He's jumping for the Looney Tunes, for their freedom and for himself. He can do this. He believes he can fly. At last, he fully embraces the laws of cartoon land; with the MonStars holding him back, his arm stretches to five times its regular length. He slam-dunks, winning the game, and it's beautiful. He had one last shot, he took it, and it paid off.

In winning the game with the Looney Tunes, Jordan remembers why he started playing basketball in the first place. He's the best damn player in all corners of the universe, and he loves the game more than anything. He's got one last shot to get his career back on track, and he's sure as hell going to take it. Mirroring real life, Michael Jordan quits major league baseball once and for all, regroups with his Chicago Bulls teammates, and climbs back on top as basketball's biggest superstar.



As always, Bill Murray steps in to help out and save the day.



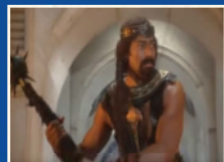
Jordan embraces Looney Tunes Land's laws to win the game.



## SPORTS SUPERSTARS

The top 5 genre athlete appearances

**WILT CHAMBERLAIN**  
**CONAN THE DESTROYER (1984)**



**1** The basketball star made his acting debut as Bombata alongside everyone's favourite former Mr Universe.

**JOHN MATUSZAK**  
**THE GOONIES (1985)**



**2** Hidden under the prosthetics that made up Sloth was American football defensive end John Matuszak.

**ANDRÉ THE GIANT**  
**THE PRINCESS BRIDE (1987)**



**3** When he wasn't in the ring at WWF, he was being brilliant in movies. Fezzik was one of his most well-known roles.




Arguably the greatest scene of the entire film is the musical montage in which Barkley, Bradley, Ewing, Johnson and Bogues attempt to figure out both where their basketball talents went and how they are going to get them back. A tragic but sexy Barry White ditty ('Basketball Jones' featuring Chris Rock) plays over a montage of the five players' efforts. Barkley sadly watches a group of girls shoot hoops as he stands just behind the outdoor court's fencing, creating a metaphor for a constant feeling of distance from the game he loves so much. The girls clock his presence.

"You're Charles Barkley," one says. Barkley nods. "Girls, come on over, hurry up! It's Charles Barkley!" He asks to play. They let him. He's terrible. They think he's a fraud. "You're not Charles Barkley, you're just a wannabe who looks like him," says the girl. "Break out, you shouldn't even be here! Be gone, wannabe! Be gone!"

It's the same for all of them. They undergo tests and medical examinations. They speak to psychiatrists. They consider alternative careers. They try bargaining with God. Nothing works. Finally, like the Looney Tunes, their last chance is Michael Jordan. He finds them all moping in a

dark and dusty gym. With their talents gone, all they have left is sitting around talking about how terrible their lives are going to be from now on. They've almost given up completely. Only Jordan can get their game back.

Pulling out the glowing MonStars ball, he tells them to touch it. They don't want to, mainly because of the fact that it's glowing, but they do it anyway. They trust him. And besides, he's their one last shot at salvaging their careers. Everything goes to plan, they get their talents back, they invite Jordan to a three-on-three match, and it's a lovely moment. But alas, he's got shit to do. He's got to go back to the court and make his NBA comeback.

*Space Jam* is extremely cheesy, there's no denying it. But, like 'I Believe I Can Fly', it's extremely cheesy in a good way. It's like a lovely bit of farmhouse cheddar, or a wedge of Brie. It's textured and moreish, and it ages like a dream, which is a really good thing considering Warner Bros has a sequel starring LeBron James on the way. James doesn't really need one last shot, but *Space Jam* might as well take one. 



*Space Jam* is out now on DVD and Blu-ray.

Jordan's B-ball pals finally get their talent back from the aliens.



The Nerdluks get to fulfil their dreams of being Looney Tunes.



Victorious, MJ makes sure the MonStars stay true to their word.

## SHAQUILLE O'NEAL KAZAAM (1996)



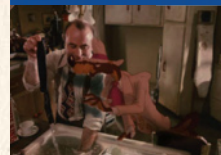
**4** Before *Space Jam* there was *Kazaam*. The 7'1" NBA star played a genie that set up camp inside a boombox.

## DAVE BAUTISTA GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY (2014)



**5** Bautista is now a full-time actor, taking on beefy roles like Drax the Destroyer in *Guardians Of The Galaxy*.

## WATCH FIRST



### WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT (1988)

A detective teams up with cartoon characters to prove Roger Rabbit's innocence.

## WATCH NEXT



### LIKE MIKE (2002)

A kid magically becomes an NBA superstar after trying on MJ's old trainers.

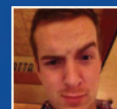


## YOUR TAKE ON THE CLASSIC

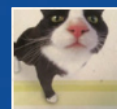
WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW



"Not enough Wile E Coyote or Elmer Fudd/Yosemite Sam per Jules/Vincent!"  
@munro0007



"One of my favourite films growing up. Used to watch it all the time; nearly destroyed the VCR with it, lol! Jordan was awesome."  
@JamiePizzey



"Anything with Bugs Bunny in it gets a good review in my book and Michael Jordan is a nice bonus!"  
@farscape08



"I have been watching plenty of this with my nephew, he's been converted from football! I ffound the shorts!!!"  
@DirectSnap\_LK



"When I was a Best Man for a friend, we listened to the *Space Jam* theme on the way to his wedding. It's how every marriage should start."  
@DomPeppiatt





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## LOOK OUT!

1. What college does Peter Parker attend?
2. What were Peter's parents wrongly accused of being?
3. What does Peter do as a part-time job?
4. Who is Peter's fiancée in the series finale's parallel universe storyline?
5. How many episodes did *Spider-Man: The Animated Series* run for?

## ALLIES

6. What is the name of Felicia Hardy's alter ego?

7. Which of Mary Jane's ex-boyfriends stalks her in the hope of winning her back?
8. What is the name of the terminally ill Spider-Man fangirl that Peter reveals his true identity to?
9. Whose help does Peter seek when his neogenic mutation starts to make him ill?
10. Which of the following has not appeared in the series: Blade, Doctor Doom, or Captain Marvel?

## VILLAINS

11. Who is the show's main villain?
12. What must Dormammu consume to sustain him?

13. What species is Morbius?
14. Name four members of the Insidious Six.
15. What is Doctor Octopus's real name?

## WHO'S WHO?

16. Which *Star Wars* actor voiced the Hobgoblin?
17. How many different actors voiced Nick Fury overall?
18. Which episode did Stan Lee appear in?
19. Who voiced Doctor Strange's sidekick Wong in the series?
20. Musician Joe Perry performed the series' theme music, but which rock band does he play in?

**DIDN'T HE/SHE DO WELL!** See how you did with our arbitrary scoring system

**16-20**  
**MADAME WEB**  
As one of the most powerful entities in the universe, your opponents need to get up a lot earlier in the morning if they want a chance at catching you out. Whatever you're doing is obviously working like a dream.

**11-15**  
**SPIDER-MAN**  
You got this! With crazy skills like yours, everyone wants to be on your team! You don't always get the recognition you deserve, but that's alright; you don't need credit to know that you've done a good job.

**6-10**  
**THE KINGPIN**  
You think you're the big man, yet you often have trouble outsmarting a kid in spandex. Money and power isn't everything. Wise up, and maybe, just maybe, someone will let you join quiz team.

**0-5**  
**FLASH THOMPSON**  
You must study hard if you want to get anywhere in life. And you should probably also try being nicer to people, otherwise no one will want you on their team.

ANSWERS: 1. EMPIRE STATE UNIVERSITY 2. SOVIET SPIES 3. FREELANCE PHOTOGRAPHER FOR THE DAILY BUGLE 4. GWEN STACY 5. 65 6. THE BLACK CAT 7. HYDRO-MAN 8. TAINA 9. PROFESSOR X 10. CAPTAIN MARVEL 11. THE KINGPIN/WILSON FISK 12. SOULS 13. VAMPIRE 14. RHINO 15. SHOCKER, DOCTOR OCTOPUS, MYSTERY, SCORPION AND THE CHAMELEON 16. MARK HAMILL 17. TWO (PHILIP ABBOTT AND JACK ANGEL) 18. THE SERIES FINALE 19. SPIDER-MAN 20. GEORGE TAKEI



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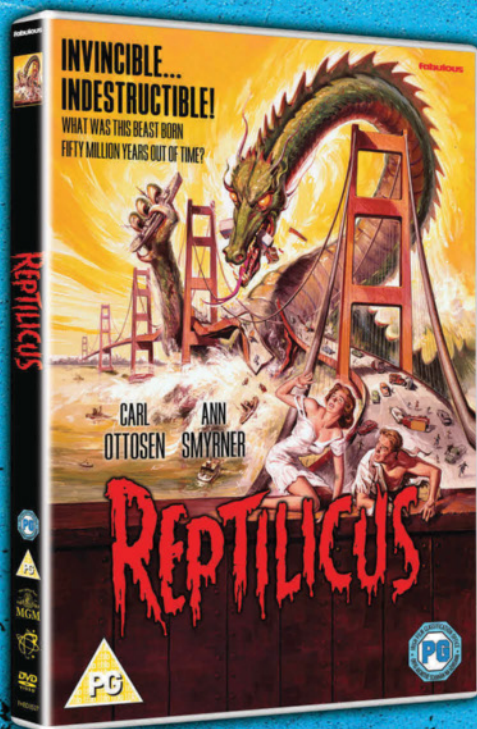
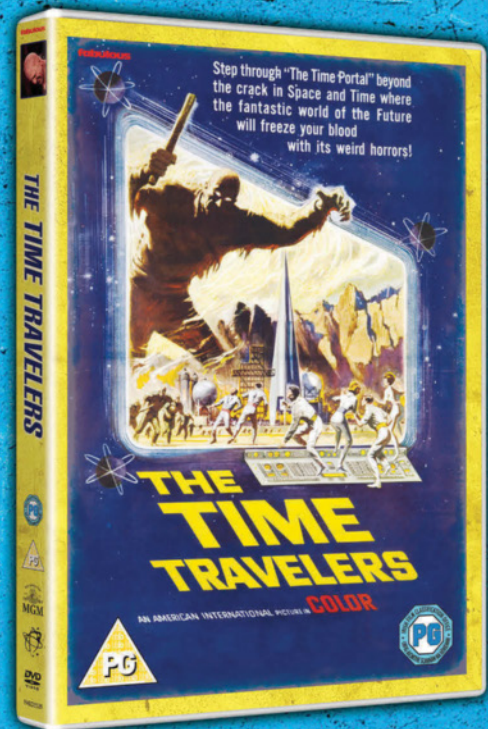
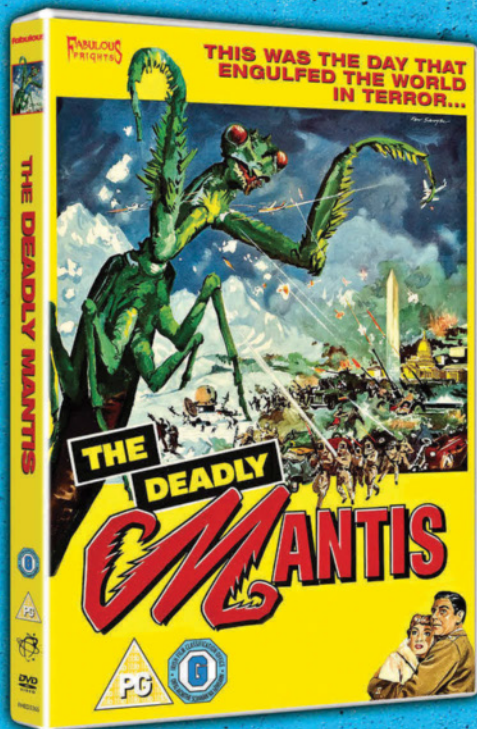
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